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ALUREDUS.

ALUREDUS,

KNIGHT OF MALTA.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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ALUREDUS.

LETTER I.

Mrs. Selwin to Lady Nelson.

Selwin Cottage.

THURSDAY, my beloved Margaretta, the die, I am afraid the fatal die, was cast, which is to determine the happiness or misery of your sister Alicia.

Unfortunate, ill-conducted girl, the pangs, the tears, thy indiscretion has

cost me, may they never be retaliated on my imprudent child!

I will pray to Heaven to avert from her that dreadful misfortune, should she ever be a parent.

I dare not enquire too nearly the motive from which she has accepted the hand of Lord Mortington. She consented with avidity to his proposals.

The influence used on this occasion, by your father and myself, was not in favour of his Lordship.

We love our children too well to follow the error of the misjudging world,—a world whose eyes are dazzled with splendour, whose judgment is biassed on the side of riches. We

We were not blinded by Lord Mortington's exalted rank, or the immensity of his fortune.—We could see, impartially, the disproportion of his union with our daughter. He is not, it is reported, of a pleasing disposition, besides, there is a horrid disparity between forty-five and seventeen. She is lively, volatile, and I fear refractory: He seems reserved and absolute.

We spoke of these, and of many other objections that we saw, but all in vain. Our advice was of no effect. We might indeed have spared ourselves the trouble of advising.

Had your sister been pleading for the object of her soul's best affections, (alas! that man was not Lord Mortington) her resolution could not have

been more strongly supported. The most romantic passion could have added no warmth to the prayers, tears, and intreaties, she employed to conquer your father's aversion to a connexion, in his opinion, highly preposterous.

Alicia thus determined, her lover importunate,—what more could be done?

Thursday we saluted her Countess of Mortington; and, I am afraid, further than a title, her views of happiness are not extended.

Why—why was I ever prevailed on to give up the care of my child's education to another? but was not that other your father's friend,—his friend from infancy?

Margaretta,

Margaretta, you have often heard me speak of Lady Derwent? My dear, when I first married Mr. Selwin, and for some years after, she was by no means unamiable; how then could I have opposed his resolves? Good man! he was imposed on by appearances, when I had long ceased to think favourably of Lady Derwent.

God knows with how much reluctance I consented to his design of giving up my Alicia to her protection. I foresaw the evils that have since happened. I will, for my poor mind's ease, endeavour to forget an event that cannot be recalled.

You, who have never wandered from the wing of your fond mother, till consigned to the arms of a worthy, in-

dulgent husband, who merits all your tenderness; how abundantly have your virtues satisfied my warmest wishes—how amply repaid the anxious attention with which I watched the growing excellencies of my Margaretta.

Had it not been for Lady Derwent, Alicia might—oh! she undoubtedly would—have been entitled to share in the eulogiums of maternal transports. Poor, poor Alicia, with all your errors, you are more the object of compassion than of blame. The fault has been in others; the consequences are all thy own. Why do I say all thy own? so long as I exist, my share in them will be capital.

I broke off abruptly. Your father came to my closet with an open letter

in

in his hand. He was in his night-gown and slippers, his spectacles lifted on his forehead, and his countenance overspread with a smile, which I mistook for one of those that always distinguishes him when he does not know if he is most inclined to be pleased or angry.

From Lady Derwent! said he, giving me the letter with an air of triumph. Read it, my dear; we are growing into importance. Here he applied to his snuff-box, whilst I read, without any violent degree of surprise, what I shall here transcribe for your perusal. It will account for your father's smile; it will tell you it was not a smile of joy or pleasure, but of resentment and contempt.

St. James's Square.

'DEAR SIR,

'Whatever has happened to occasion a coldness between our families, it is the sincere wish of Lord Derwent and myself that an act of oblivion be passed on all sides.

'The happy fortune of our Alicia gives great pleasure to us all. The inclination she betrayed for my son—but no more of that—you know, Sir, I am not his only parent, or it might have been otherwise. However, Countess of Mortington is much more advantageous for her than if she had married where she shewed but too much partiality.

'I am charmed with the late instance she has given us of her prudence. I

'expect

'expect this winter to see her reward-
'ed for it by the eclat with which she
'will be received into the politest cir-
'cles. I shall take upon myself to in-
'troduce her, and convince the censo-
'rious world how mistaken they have
'been in the judgment of her conduct.

'You see we have quite forgot al-
'ready every thing that should not be
'remembered. I pray follow our ex-
'ample, and come with our pretty
'Countess to town. I languish to em-
'brace you; you know I have not had
'the pleasure of seeing you for four-
'teen years. You have now a very
'good opportunity. I dare say Lord
'Mortington will give you a corner in
'his coach. I hear he is preparing to
'out-do all that ever hath been done in
'the way of appearance. Surely Alicia

'must be the happiest creature in the 'world.

'For my part, notwithstanding any 'childish errors, any little *faux pas*, 'which is highly excusable in seven-'teen, I was always of opinion she had 'good sense with a proper share of that 'laudable ambition that can alone sup-'port the honour of a family.

'My compliments to Mrs. Selwin. 'If she should take it into her head 'to come to town, I shall be glad to 'see her; but she has been so long 'buried in the country, that I am 'afraid she would find herself rather 'aukward and uneasy in a life of 'fashion, yet it may do well enough 'too, for a week or so, with her 'daughter; and you know she need 'not go into public.

'Bromsgrove

'Bromsgrove has been in France 'ever since that foolish affair between 'him and Alicia. I could wish it to 'blow over before he thinks of a seri- 'ous establishment. Such events are 'much better forgot than remembered. 'He travels with his governor; and this 'second tour will complete his educa- 'tion. Lord Derwent heard from him 'three days ago; he is very well, and 'in great spirits.

'Every thing has happened for the 'best. Young people, like Broms- 'grove and Alicia, can be no possible 'judges of what will make them 'happy. A boy, who wants three 'months of writing man, and a girl 'hardly seventeen, are mere children, 'and must submit to be guided by 'their parents.

'But,

'But, as I was saying, pray let us 'see you. I hope you are not so much 'rusticated as to prefer the dreary, un-'entertaining country at this season, to 'the pleasures of London; especially 'when your family are beginning to 'figure away in high life. I cannot 'suppose yon will be so unpardonably 'absurd to stay at home. If you are 'not the most altered man upon earth, 'you will instantly set out with Lord 'and Lady Mortington.

'Your's,

'DERWENT.'

Whilst I was reading this very curious epistle, your father was leaning over the back of my chair, with one hand rested on my shoulder, and which by an involuntary emotion seemed to press

press with a convulsive kind of agitation, when he saw my eyes fixed on that part of her Ladyship's letter, in which she condescends to give me an invitation to the house of my daughter, under the kind restriction—her words could mean nothing less—that I was not to appear in public. I folded the letter in silence, and returned it with a smile. Neither my silence, or my smile, proceeded from resentment at that instant. I had no other feeling than pity and contempt for the writer. Mr. Selwin, I was sorry for it, misconstrued both; and, in a voice of grief and passion, asked, if I had so ill an opinion of his affection for me as to suppose he would not resent, to the latest moment of his life, such unprecedented insolence. I assured him, that so far from doubting his affection, my only

only uneasiness was occasioned by the fear that it would lead him to express more anger, on account of this silly immaterial letter, than was consistent with his own health, and those ties of civility now so necessary to the reputation of Lady Mortington. Alas! continued I, how very light, how very insignificant, are those insults you complain of! By no means, in no manner, can they affect our happiness. Independence, thank heaven! entirely destroys the sting which otherwise would have attended them. There are real injuries, my love,—injuries that may be destructive to our peace; yet even these we must learn to forget. I believe, Margaretta, I sighed; your father started from his seat; for he had taken a chair by me. He walked hastily two or three turns about the room;

room; he muttered something to himself, but the name of Alicia was distinct. My heart was troubled. What did I not suffer for him?

Provoking calmness! said he, as he came towards me: reproach—upbraid me. I know you cannot but remember, that I, I only, have been the cause of your distresses. I will never forgive that woman, by all—

Hold, hold, cried I, dearest—best of men! do not make a rash vow, destructive to your own repose; or think me unjust to a husband, by accusing him of unkindness, who, in a thousand acts of unremitting tenderness, has ever engaged my love, my esteem, my veneration.

You

You forgive me, then. Oh, Lucy! can you teach me to forgive myself? But for my obstinacy, my cursed obstinacy, Alicia might now have been as great a comfort to us as our Henrietta. Fool, fool! I must tear her—drag her—from your arms to foster her in the bosom of a wretch who has murdered the reputation of—my child; who has driven her upon a man she cannot love. No, no, she marries Mortington only to screen her from further shame, or perhaps—

But, my dear, said I, interrupting him; terrified at the height his passion had risen to; let her motives for accepting the hand of Lord Mortington be what they will, as it is her own choice, her own act and deed, she may possibly be happy; let us solace ourselves

selves with the consolation of believing her innocent as to the commission of a real crime. Whatever has been faulty in her conduct, has any part of it been concealed from Lord Mortington? was her husband a stranger to her elopement with Lord Bromsgrove? to her husband she has been particularly exposed. Surely, we can at least have nothing to dread from any latent discoveries. Had he thought so seriously of her imprudence as we do, would he have raised her to his name—to his rank? Impossible! the blindness of passion could not so far mislead him. The few hours Alicia was on the road with her lover, before they were brought back; the protestations she made us; the still more convincing testimony of Lord Bromsgrove in the generous letter he wrote

you

cal cruelty has thrown upon my family. She shall be answered: may heaven renounce me, if I do not try to make her savage nature sensible of the aggravated woes she has brought upon me!

He pronounced the last sentence with so much disorder, so much energy, that I said, by way of palliating matters, let me intreat you, my dear, not to agitate your mind thus; give her Ladyship's letter a second reading; certainly, the contents are not meant to offend you; I am not clear the manner in which they are expressed is unexceptionable, but firmly believe they are intended as a proof of her inclination to be on good terms with you.

Be

Be on good terms with me! not mean to offend me, madam! by heaven, you would impose on my senses. I see your motive for speaking thus. I admire the goodness of your heart; but I will not be led or governed in my resentments.

I repented that I had gone so far in vindicating the enemy of my repose. I wished, if possible, to soften your father's emotions, on the consideration how much his constitution might suffer from the violent perturbations under which I saw him labour. My plan was altogether wrong; for though his disposition is exceedingly amiable, his temper is not formed for opposition. It is seldom he is displeased; but, when provoked, there is a sort of severity in his anger that alarms me strangely

strangely. Whilst he spoke, his eyes were fixed upon my face. He saw, reflected on my countenance, the force his last retort had on my heart; his looks mellowed into kindness; he was grieved to have given me pain, he embraced me tenderly, and apologized for the warmth of his expressions. I quarrel with you, my love, said he, for being possessed of virtues to which I have no pretensions! But are you not too passive, too gentle, too forgiving? it is wonderful to me how you can so soon forget the personal insults you in particular have received from Lady Derwent. You want a protector, continued he, (half smiling) as much as an infant in its cradle. I am, and will be, that protector. Your innocence, your meekness, shall not be abused with impunity. I go to answer

swer her haughty, imperious letter. Make yourself entirely easy on my account. I entered your closet in a very different humour from what I shall carry with me.

He did not wait my reply; as he said this, he left my apartment.

God bless my dearest child! the prospect before you, of Sir William's returning health, is one of my greatest consolations. I embrace you both with affection.

LETTER

LETTER II.

From the same to the same.

I WAS so much interested in giving you the scene which passed between your father and myself, that I did not recollect, till after I had closed my last, that I had been guilty of a palpable omission. I had neglected to inform you that Lord Mortington and Alicia left us on Friday. He carries her to Mortington Castle, in Shropshire, till the meeting of parliament; at which time Lord Mortington proposes taking her to London.

I tremble

I tremble, Margaretta, when I think of the fatal consequences, that it is more than probable may attend her return thither. To the pleasures of that dissipated town, she has already sacrificed too largely. Of what avail are all the fruitless wishes with which I follow her destiny? She is married greatly; much, very much, beyond our expectations; I might add, beyond our desires. I should have been better satisfied, if her choice had fallen on a man whose circumstances would not have admitted of his indulging her in these London excursions. I should have thought it more eligible for her happiness, if she had been fixed altogether in the country; the rational enjoyments to be found in retirement would have been the most wholesome physic her enervated mind could have

applied to, and use might in time have made it palatable.

I must confine these sentiments within my own bosom. What advantage can I now expect from divulging them? Poor dear child! she has never been under my conduct; and now, that she is a wife, it is too late for a parent's authority to interfere.

About noon Lord Mortington's new carriage drove up the avenue. I was standing with Alicia at the window, giving her such advice for here future behaviour as, I am shocked to say, she never has received at the time when lessons of prudence make the deepest impressions. Her heart has been wrong; very wrong directed, and her head

turned

turned by cruel kindness, by improper —almost criminal indulgencies.

How dreadful are the effects of education on the too large scale, by which my Alicia has been measured! Why was not Mr. Selwin contented with bestowing on her, as we did on you, such advantages as were in our own power to procure, without accepting the assistance of others less cautious than ourselves?

Oh! Margaretta, I have not, I fear I never shall, forgive Lady Derwent. My spirits are sinking under the most disagreeable reflections. I will quit them if possible, and return to my subject.

I was pleased to observe your sister much affected by the arguments I

urged with more than maternal fondness—with the pungent feelings of maternal anxiety,—melancholy, maternal anxiety. She more than once applied her handkerchief to her eyes. Never shall I forget the transport this appearance conveyed to me. It is the first that for many years she has given me cause to experience. The sensibility that charmed me transfused additional beauty over her features. A new character seemed to inform her whole countenance. At this moment she looked more than commonly lovely. She flattered me with the strongest assurances of exact inviolable circumspection in all her future conduct. She wept; she fell at my feet; she intreated my pardon for the uneasiness her former imprudence had occasioned me. She did not plead in vain. By

words

words, by tears, by embraces, I convinced her she was more than pardoned,—that my forgiveness was attended by affection.

Whilst I held her in my arms, the equipages, we had seen at a distance, drove up to the door. At first a visible paleness overspread her face; but observing their magnificence, and the multitude by which they were surrounded, her complexion heightened; a lively glow succeeded to her former paleness: it was the flush of joy; which discovered but too plainly the sudden emotion of surprise and pleasure. Her eyes, from being almost dimmed with tears, now sparkled with vivacity; and she could not help exclaiming—my God, how superb!

Insensible girl! I was going to tell her, how little I approved her being so much elated by appearances, when Lord Mortington and your father prevented me by entering the library. Alicia stept to her Lord; and with the sweetest grace imaginable, said something, but in so low a voice, that I could not distinguish what it was. I could see it pleased him, for the natural reserve of his features was softened by an affectionate smile; he kissed her hand, and assured her, his happiness would ever depend on her approbation.

After a few minutes general conversation, and repeated invitations given to Mr. Selwin and myself to visit them in Shropshire, we embraced our daughter.

Never

Never shall I lose sight of your father's penetrating look, when he said to her, before she had quitted his arms, "Let your mother's example, "Alicia, be the standard of your ac- "tions: she cannot have a better pre- "cedent, my Lord,"—turning to his Lordship. Your sister blushed; Lord Mortington really seemed touched with concern, as if he had read the feelings of her heart, and pitied her confusion. He thanked Mr. Selwin,—he bowed respectfully to me, and replied, he was perfectly well assured it must be intirely his own fault, if, in possession of such a wife, he was not the happiest of mankind; saying this, he offered her his hand. She returned once more to our embraces, after which she permitted him to lead her to the carriage—the most magnificent vis-a-vis I ever be-

held,—into which he followed her, and they drove off so rapidly, that they were out of sight in a moment. Your father sighed; a tear fell from my eye; a prayer spontaneously sprung from the heart to the lips of both; it was, that she may be ever happy—ever deserve to be happy.

I could have indulged myself hours in calculating the chances for and against her felicity. A thousand ideas, yet unarranged, would have prolonged the chain of my meditations; but recollecting I had not seen Olivia, who I have engaged to go with your sister, for reasons you will be at no loss to discern, in the light of a companion —add that of Monitress, it will help you more easily to define my intentions.—I rung the bell, and sent for her

her to my closet. She instantly obeyed my summons. I took a tender farewell of this dear, amiable young creature; and, with two other females who are appointed to attend on Alicia, she stepped into the coach that waited for them, and followed Lady Mortington.

What a valuable treasure, Margaretta, did you send me in this good girl! when I commissioned you to procure me a servant from France, I knew your judgment would direct you to chuse a woman of character; one in whom I could confide the management of family affairs, and accomplished enough to entertain me with reading French authors,—a pleasure which, from the weakness of my sight, I must have denied myself, without the assistance of such a domestic. I thought the engaging a person of this

humble kind would be attended with a good deal of difficulty. Judge then my astonishment, when your Olivia presented herself at Selwin Cottage. What a prodigy! But you know, my dear this is not the first time I have written to you on the subject of our interview; though I never could attempt being particular enough to do her justice. Her amazing beauty, her artless modesty, the elegance, yet humility of her address, the sweetness of her voice, the unaffected dignity of her manners, are as much beyond description, as it would be impossible to make you understand the effect all those charms united had upon me, or the respect, approaching to veneration, with which I received her into my family. This dear girl has been every hour, during eighteen months I have had her under

my

my protection, drawing nearer to my heart. She seems to struggle with some sentiment of melancholy. I hope the gaiety of Lady Mortington's company will dissipate her chagrin; or, perhaps, her sadness may be habitual. It is very possible for a mind cultivated, informed, enriched as her's is, to be cloathed in sedateness at any early season, before time has led her into the path of experience. I should even be convinced that what I have termed melancholy and sadness may be more properly called a constitutional seriousness in the disposition of Olivia, if I had not sometimes surprised her in tears, and at other periods seen her set off the charms of vivacity in its most innocent engaging colours; in her it looks so amiable, so independent of levity, that gloom itself might fall in

love with cheerfulness, and modesty pay homage to wit, under the delicate restrictions by which she bounds them. It will be difficult for you, Margaretta, to imagine the loss I have sustained in her society. I submit to it for the benefit of my Alicia: what is there I would not sacrifice to the shadow only of her safety? Olivia was not less averse to a separation; she yielded but to my intreaties. Her own inclinations were not consulted, when she exchanged our family for that of Lord Mortington's. She promised to oblige me with tears of reluctance:—she quitted Selwin Cottage with sorrow.

Should Alicia behave as I hope she will; should she conduct herself with propriety; a companion so accomplished as Olivia must heighten all her rational

tional amusements, and brighten the hours of solitude; or, should the force of education hurry her again into that dangerous road, so destructive to virtue, the wisdom, the purity, the piety, of this exemplary creature cannot but have some degree of influence on a mind ever so volatile.

I have this moment received your welcome letter, and shall now leave you to go and rejoice with your father on the pleasing hope you have given us of seeing Sir William and you the beginning of winter.

I found Mr. Selwin writing; he laid down his pen as I came into his closet. I gave him your letter. My happiness received a considerable addition by his participation. Margaretta, my dearest child! your father is the tenderest of

parents

parents; he has been misled; but the pangs of remorse, which follows one error in judgment, afflict him so sensibly, that I am distressed to witness his regrets. The inclosed to Lady Derwent, which he concluded in my presence, and permitted me to send you a copy of, will shew how much his soul is disordered; it will speak the disappointment Lady Derwent has made him suffer. His recriminations are severe, but in my heart I cannot disapprove their severities. Were I inclined to palliate again, I am now exceedingly well convinced my interposition could be of no effect. For his own dear sake, I will pray to heaven that time may mellow his displeasure. Adieu, my treasure! adieu my beloved Margaretta!

LETTER

LETTER III.

Charles Selwin, Esq. to the Countess of Derwent.

[Incloſed in the preceding.]

MADAM,

Selwin Cottage.

TWENTY-FIVE years ago I thought myself blessed in a friend, whose worth was inestimable—she was a dear amiable girl—the cheerful assistant to the best of mothers in her family management—she was the pleasing, the delightful companion of a man, who at that time doated on her with more than brotherly affection, rather with the fondness of a parent. At this æra she was too respected by all who knew her—health glowed upon her cheek

cheek—smiling condescension gave the highest charm to her whole countenance—a charm even superior to what beauty can express. Beauty was an advantage to which she had no pretensions, but the affability of her manners more than compensated for the want of personal attractions. Simplicity, with all her train of tender virtues, seemed the genuine inhabitant of her gentle bosom, undisturbed, unruffled by ambition. Her rank even then was conspicuous enough to place her above the commonality of people, but her humility made her assume no superiority. The good, the wise, the prudent, found a place in her heart; and merit, though covered with rags, was admitted to her friendship. This excellent young woman, Madam, existed more in imagination than in reality; or if she ever was what

what once her partial friends believed her, how changed—how fallen—how astonishing the transformation—how noxious the weeds of pride, passion, avarice, and deceit, which have over-run every flower indulgent nature had planted in her soul!

I may tire your Ladyship with this tedious detail; but consider, I am verging towards that age to which recounting old stories is a privilege annexed by custom, however dull or unentertaining to the hearers. With this privilege on my side, I must beg leave to encroach further on your patience. Whilst I could boast of a friend, such as I have described, I made another addition to my stock of felicity; and, when Mr. Harcourt bestowed upon me the only child of his age, I confess to you, Madam, I

was

was humble enough to think myself and my family honoured by the connection. This friend—this ward of my father's—bound to our interest by the strongest, tendefest ties of obligation, but who I fear was even then an adept in the art of hyprocrisy,—pretended to share my sentiments; she even encreased my joys by seeming to partake largely of them. My wife, the sincerest—the most valuable of her sex, received with pleasure her friendly advances; she more than received—she condescended to return them, though warm even to a romance of professions. I had nothing now to ask of providence—the father of two lovely girls—what had I more to ask? I looked with transport round the circle of my domestic treasures—I found it difficult to determine, to which of them I was

I was most indebted for the soc al comfortor of my fire-side.

This scene of exquisite tranquillity, like other extraordinary blessings, was more fervent than durable. Among those blessings, I reckoned upon friendship. Something above a common station in life, the friend on whom I reckoned, was calculated to support with apparent uniformity. How she walked under the weightier burthens of titles remains yet to be related. Heaven intended she should shine in the unconspicuous sphere of retirement, but fortune crossed its wise purposes. Fortune exalted her to an eminence so exceedingly above the level of her understanding, that her head grew giddy with looking down on the millions beneath her; and such is her intoxication, that even

even I, the representative of a family to whom she is most indebted, am overlooked by the eye of her elevation, or mingled with the humble multitude in her high perception.

Reflect a moment, Lady Derwent, on the disappointments, the regrets, I have experienced by her fall from those fancied perfections with which my blind infatuation had fondly decked her. Can you reflect steadily on those truths?—If you can, confess, effrontery itself must be abashed at the moderation, the coolness, the command, I have preserved over my temper, in repeating facts so horrid in their nature. I represent them, you may be assured, Madam, with as much calm contempt as I at this moment feel for the unworthy subject from whom their source has been

been derived. Resentment will not find a place in my bosom. Resentment is a passion that will not spend its force on objects of our total indifference; something of former love, respect, or kindness, must give it vigour. I harbour no sentiment of this kind for the unfeeling enemy of my peace. I know your Ladyship will be far from impatient for the remaining melancholy recital; perhaps, what I have further to complain of, may wring your heart—truth has a thousand probes to search the most callous; this is the last time I shall attempt to probe it. I do not expect to restore a conscience, whose voice has been so long silenced—that is a task only for omnipotence to perform;—neither have I a wish to awaken compassion. Will compassion give me back my peace of mind? will

compassion

compassion bring back the deserter of happiness, which is fled from me? If it could do this, then would I kneel even to you, Madam, for compassion. What I now bespeak is attention, and that I am in some sort entitled to command.

Possibly, your Ladyship may have forgot what Miss Bellport was, before she married Lord Derwent—a man faultless except in suffering his wife to govern him despotically. If you cannot recollect her as she was twenty-two years ago, turn to the beginning of this letter; examine her picture, which I have faithfully held up. Admire, reverence, adore, that stupendous art, that ingenious dexterity, with which she contrived to dupe her family, her friends, her acquaintance, of their love, their reverence, their esteem, without one

one solid good quality to engage love reverence, or esteem. The mask of hypocrisy was not dropped at once, it slid off by degrees. Exquisite tormentor! Before it fell quite to the ground, great God! I was to feel the full extent of her power, in the science of deception. I repeat again, exquisite tormentor! As a parent, my wrongs are insupportable. I curse my own folly in tearing my sweet, smiling, lovely Alicia from the arms of her tender mother, to place her in those of a perfidious woman. Alas! my eyes are too late opened to my weakness. I am calm—I am resolved to be calm. The arguments that were used in prevailing on me, ought to have deterred me from making such a sacrifice. I have bought experience—I have bought it dearly. I now see the horrid tendency of a private gentleman permitting

permitting his daughter to be brought up in a family of quality. Human nature is at best imperfect. We think ourselves competent judges of the hearts of others, when at the same time we have but a very confined knowledge of our own. For instance,

When I gave up my child to this directress, on the culture of whose mind no pains, no attention, had been spared; whose conduct in the early morning of her days had been not only irreproachable, but amiable:—when I yielded up up Alicia to her insinuating persuasions; I had no idea her care was to be confined merely to exterior accomplishments, whilst the finer improvements of the soul were to be totally neglected, trodden under foot, as useless—if not troublesome—in the road of fashionable

able life. This single error shews how little I was acquainted with the heart of Lady Derwent; how much less with my own is expressed in few words. I thought I never could have ceased to love her; that she was the last person I should suspect of deceit; but I have been deceived in both—most intolerably deceived.

Mrs. Selwin's retired disposition,—my attachment to the country, which her good sense, sweet temper, and interesting conversation, can render delightful to me through all the revolving seasons,—fix me to this spot. Mine are serene, tranquil enjoyments, that I would not relinquish to be placed in a much superior station to that humble one from which I have the presumption to address your Ladyship. I

have never formed the most distant design of visiting your Metropolis, nor have ever known the langour of satiety in fifteen years residence at Selwin Cottage, in the bosom of solitude—in the peaceful retreat of my ancestors.

If you are curious to enquire, how I have contrived to murder time? I shall not scruple to answer your enquiries. I have not been necessitated, Madam, to assassinate that friend of mankind—I mean the friend to such of the human species as are not his declared enemies—those who mark his progress with crimes of injustice, pride, deceit, and cruelty, are numbered as his foes. No wonder that they should see his approach with disgust, his departure with joy; he brings no balmy comforts on his unsullied pinions, but to the just, the

the humble, the sincere, the merciful;—to the former he comes loaded with self-reproach—self-condemnation.

Not a moment has hung heavy on our hands; they have all been employed in bestowing on Margaretta those essential and official advantages, which we made no doubt our other daughter was receiving from Lady Derwent; whilst we contented ourselves with having Alicia sent to us, at such stated periods as her indulgent protectress would condescend to bestow on the deluded father. At such seasons we were not quietly allowed the possession of our child; she was hurried from us, under some pretence or other, before we could discover the bent of her inclinations, or what progress had been made in the solid

acquirements of her mind. A visit of two months, which I insisted on her making us at the time we parted with Margaretta, (who attended her husband to France) disclosed to us the errors of her education. We found that all the pains taken for its completion had been only to subvert her understanding and vitiate her principles; were I to tell you, Madam, the effect this discovery had on her mother, you would not be able to comprehend it—it must be a heart tender, humane, refined like her own, that could enter into the nature of her distress. Your Ladyship is too much taken up in nobler pursuits, to know any thing of such common feelings—feelings that providence, without regarding rank or precedency, blindly bestows upon its otherwise insensible creatures. Certainly,

tainly, you will glory in the ascendency this friend had gained over me; perhaps, you will laugh too at my sottish stupidity, when I tell you, notwithstanding the tears—the intreaties of a beloved wife, who evidently knew more of her disposition than myself; notwithstanding the evidence of my own judgment, and the checks of a reproving conscience, all pleading to withdraw my child from the imminent danger which threatened her, my obstinacy was not to be conquered—I bid defiance to all opposition—I once more threw her into the jaws of destruction. My kind, my affectionate friend, had no daughter of her own; —she was ill—she was low-spirited; —if I took away her darling, it would certainly send her to the grave—she could not exist without her sweet girl—

was it possible I should be so cruel to kill her at one blow?—her fate depended on the return of Alicia! This Alicia—this darling, this sweet girl—could not fail of a brilliant establishment under her auspices;—she only need to shew herself once more in town to have her choice of being fixed in some noble family, whose alliance would aggrandize my own.

Such were the incentives used to overcome the reluctance I expressed in giving up Alicia the last time, to the protection of Lady Derwent; whom in my best days I doated on, and had not even then ceased to love, because hoodwinked by partiality. Heaven is my witness, I yielded not to interested views—the sacrifice I made was to affection. Good God! what a sacrifice! My wife forgives me with a generosity all

all her own—I never shall—never can—forgive myself.

Your Ladyship shall be told,—yes, Madam, you must submit to hear, the singular reward I met with from this grateful creature for my blameable—I am afraid, criminal condescension. Those sighs, she has drawn from the recesses of a heart undisturbed but by her machinations, must waste themselves on air—the traces of a tear, which blots the paper as I write, is the poor proportion I transmit to her of the woes she has so ingeniously manufactured, and which, like the poisoned shirt of Hercules, penetrates with acrimonious venom. Human nature can sustain emotions, such as I now experience, but to a certain degree. I lay down my pen, to acquire if possible

that fortitude, which must support me under my present feelings. A few minutes reflection may restore me to reason, and enable me to proceed with composure.

CONTINUATION.

As a man, I blush at my own weakness, that will not suffer me to recapitulate my wrongs, my unprecedented wrongs—without execrating the author of them.—There is but one alternative; I must either execrate her, or be silent—I chuse the latter. Where I drop the malignant subject, let your conscience take it up; and whilst I forbear to speak of a sin so capital against heaven, against humanity, let the motive that condemns me to silence cover you with confusion.

It

It would be deviating too much from the superior resentments of an injured father, to recriminate on the insolence of the last letter with which your Ladyship honoured me, and which I suppose is one of those many privileges you think yourself intitled to under the conspicuous denomination of a modern fine Lady.

I shall not accept of a corner in Lord Mortington's coach—or permit my wife, if it is her inclination, to visit her daughter in town, to conceal from the world such treasures of heart and understanding as, by example, may make it better and wiser. If the received opinion be true, that the honour of a family is in the keeping of its women, to what different stewards has that of Selwin and Bellport been consigned? A wife, who, by every action

of her life, has added to its lustre—a daughter, who, being transplanted into one more ennobled, forgets the stock from which she descended, and madly tramples under her feet the friends of her family, and the unsullied virtues of her ancestors; as if, by debasing the house from which she sprung, she made her own exaltation the more glaring.

I shall now release you, Madam. More will be unnecessary. I have done with you for ever—my letter requires no answer—here must cease all correspondence.

LETTER

LETTER IV.

Lord Bromsgrove to Sir Philip West.

Paris.

YOUR letter reached me here, and filled me with astonishment. Woman—woman—how fickle are thy best resolves! Married, you assure me she is married!—married to Lord Mortington!

How comes it, dear West, that you express so little surprize at this extraordinary event. You, who placed her by my side in the chaise that was to

have conveyed us to the land of marriage—perhaps of repentance!—'Faith, I begin to think the latter was far from impossible. May not matters turn out better as they are? My rival is not the most formidable in the world; as a husband he may help affairs forward without my paying the slavish tax of matrimony. I am not a villain who can glory in seduction—nor am I without the passions common to men in the hey-day of their lives. I loved Alicia violently, loved her on the most honourable terms: I would not at that time have injured her for the universe. The case is now quite altered; when a fine woman submits to give her hand to a man twenty years older than herself—such a man as Mortington (weigh well this consideration) when she gives him her hand, at the very moment she has

has convinced the world—even against the laws of rigid prudence—that her heart is in the possession of a gay young fellow. What is the conclusion that forty-nine out of fifty will draw from her conduct?—Am I then to blame for raising a superstructure on so excellent a foundation? You may as well tell me, if I saw a bill on the door of a house to invite a tenant, and if that house suited my taste—suited my circumstances, that I should not knock and ask the terms of the owner, as that I ought not to observe the signal Lady Mortington has thrown out to attract me. So that affair is settled.

And now I will tell you, Sir Philip, how like a fool I have acted—how like a school-boy I have blubbered for the loss of a mere bauble. I thought her virtuous,

virtuous, amiable, constant, I thought her so intirely devoted to me, that no force, no arguments, could shake her resolution. In short, I thought her an angel, but she is a woman—a woman of the world. You have done more to restore me to my senses, in three lines, than a long course of travelling could have effected. Greatly as she has disappointed—grievously as she has offended me, I may be brought to forgive her, but it shall be on my own plan. You must think me generous; and I expect your friendship will increase towards me from the conquest I have so nobly gained over my resentment. Something whispers me—perhaps it may be conscience; it inquires if I can coolly look forwards to the seduction of ——— ———

Away,

Away, officious monitor!—why should I, who have an undoubted right to her affections, keep at a severe awful distance; whilst by the disposal of her hand, she has invited every fool, every coxcomb, to impertinent familiarity? Am I to be the only one to stand aloof? The demands of honour I have fully satisfied; the shadow only now arises to oppose my desires. Never, even in thought did I offend Miss Selwin's delicacy, as long as I had the least reason to imagine she possessed that unfashionable female incumbrance. I am disabused! and as a woman of spirit—a votary of pleasure, who can have so great a claim as myself to her indulgence? How luxurious are my prospects! Heigh-ho! prithee let me confess my weakness—I had rather she had been virtuous and my wife,

wife, than a voluptuary and my mistress. A man may always provide himself with a mistress, if that is his pursuit; but where he aims at higher enjoyments, insupportable is a disappointment.

How the devil came I by these antiquated notions? and why am I such a blockhead that I cannot keep them to myself? Mark me well! you are the only friend on earth with whom I dare confide sentiments so obsolete—were they made public I should be the very butt of ridicule—the mark in whose sides satire would fix her sharpest arrows. Remember, from this moment my reputation is in your keeping: be careful of my secret; for was it to be blown, that I had betrayed such opinions as in the fulness of friendship

friendship have just escaped me, I should never get another smile from the fair circle that composes my mother's drawing-room.

I intreat your forgiveness for having so long delayed to answer the enquiries which my sudden departure from England has made necessary for your information. It was unfortunate that I could not see you before I sat out;—half an hour's conversation would have explained every thing; and I should have been spared recounting at this time scenes that I wish to bury in forgetfulness. I know you are interested in every thing that concerns me:—I am sensible the curiosity you express proceeds from that intire regard with which you honour me.—Whatever, therefore, it may cost me, in

recalling

recalling past transactions, which I cannot review with indifference; you shall be satisfied of all with an ingenuousness and candour, of which, on other occasions, you have witnessed my nature is not unsusceptible.

The subject on which I have been writing so absolutely engrossed my ideas, that I should have forgot this is the day on which I am to be presented to the Grand Monarch, had not the Chevalier Beauval opportunely put me in mind of time's near approach for that ceremony. I am yet a man of the world, and enough in love with its customs to submit to them without reluctance. I leave you only for a few hours; the first I can again dedicate to my closet and sober reflection shall be yours.

CONTINUATION.

CONTINUATION.

Before I enter on the task you have assigned me, it may not be amiss to hint that I have made no contemptible figure in the French court. The king remembered me when I was last at Paris, at which time he was Dauphine. What I would have you understand by my saying I made no contemptible figure is, that I was received with particular marks of distinction by his Majesty. I was flattered with the same gracious condescension from his royal consort: she is a lovely woman; the animation of her countenance tells you she will submit to have no female competitor in the government of that nation.

Since

Since my return to our Hotel, I have been receiving the visits of half the nobility I met at court, who have laid such a train of amusements for me, that my politeness being entangled, I don't know when I shall escape to set forward on my travels. Monsieur le Guard does not seem quite so well satisfied as his pupil with this delay.

To-morrow I spend the day at the elegant Château of the Duke d' Deni, about twelve miles out of town. I have ordered myself to be denied the remainder of this evening, that in the multiplicity of my growing engagements, I may not be guilty of an omission in friendship, or your curiosity remain longer unsatisfied. Recollect—but why bid you recollect? you cannot already have forgotten the

transports,

transports that glowed on the cheek, that sparkled in the eyes of Alicia, when in your presence I swore to her inviolable fidelity. Think of her tender reply, when I pledged my honour, that if any accident should prevent the intention of our expedition, never to give my vows to any other woman—When I solemnly protested I would make her mine the moment I was at liberty to act without constraint. Did she not seem convinced of my sincerity? —did she not make all the returns to these repeated proofs of my attachment that my reason or my passion could expect?—returns which raised her infinitely in my opinion—highly flattering the serious sentiments my heart entertained in her favour. Alicia's characteristic is not that of feeling exquisitely? but to the preference I gave her

sixty miles from the capital, when I prevailed on my apprehensive companion to repose herself for half an hour, in a house detached from the road. Too great security is often productive of danger. I thought myself so very secure, as not to admit the smallest conception, that the scheme I had so ingeniously carved out for my happiness could have met with any interruption. Delighted with, and delighting each other, we were just sat down to such a repast as the house afforded, when my father's coach drove up to the door, not ten yards from the room in which we were sitting, the horses all in a foam and on a full gallop. I forgot my own emotion at this distressing moment; I flew to support my Alicia, who almost fainted in my arms. Whilst we were in this situation,

situation, his Lordship, with a countenance inflamed by anger, burst upon us. He stood still at his entrance.—Our consternation raised his pity—he came forward, he beheld the agonies to which Alicia's condition had reduced me—he saw that, regardless of his presence, I acted more like a madman than a rational creature—he saw all this, and his anger instantly subsided. He assisted most humanely in her recovery, which was with difficulty effected—he even dropped a tear of compassion over our misfortunes. We threw ourselves on our knees before him. He raised—he tenderly embraced us; but assured us our fate depended not on him; it must depend intirely on Lady Derwent; that whatever cause we had given him for displeasure, he heartily forgave it, kindly

adding, he would use his utmost influence with my mother to seal our pardon. Though I adore my father for the goodness of his heart, which, when he is left to act for himself, is discoverable in the most trivial of his actions, yet when he referred us to my mother, in that sentence I read my condemnation. I saw the fate of my attachment to Alicia—I saw my union with her must be deferred till I could assert my own independence. You know, by the nature of my uncle's will, that independence is at a considerable distance. It is yet four years and some months before I reach the age of twenty-five.

You may think me whimsical, that I never mentioned to Miss Selwin, my being intitled, at the above period, to an

an estate of three thousand pounds a year; it was a circumstance I carefully concealed—she did not even suspect I had any such resource. I reserved this secret to surprise her agreeably after our union had taken place—I chose to owe my success to love alone. I reasonèd foolishly—but where or when is wisdom to be found in the reasoning of a lover? I thought if she would run the risk of sharing poverty with me till I came to the title; for before that time she supposed it was in the power of my father, consequently of my mother, to leave me pennyless; —if she would submit to a chance which amounted almost to certainty, could I require a more convincing proof of her affection? To obtain this desirable proof, I hid from her my being heir to Sir Thomas Darnly. Sir

Thomas died whilst Alicia was on her last visit to Selwin Cottage. As no family affairs were ever spoken of in her presence, from this particular reserve I entertained no fear of her receiving the intelligence by any other means.

My father's reference to Lady Derwent determined me to antedate my discovery, to point out to her the goal of our future felicity, the first moment I could find an opportunity of speaking to her alone. From my mother, I had no reason to form the supposition of a more speedy conclusion to our hopes —I knew her disposition too well.

Notwithstanding she would have spared no device—neglect no manœuvre—to match Alicia with any other man of rank, yet she would never have suffered

suffered her own family to be contaminated (her phrase) by an alliance beneath them. I was ever afraid to shew any little attentions to Alicia before her Ladyship—attentions that might have been exceedingly natural, without proceeding from design, circumstances considered—bred up as we were from infancy together. A shrug of the shoulders, a contemptuous smile, declared her disapprobation—nor did she always confine herself to silent prohibitions. A thousand times I have been told the impropriety of a nobleman marrying the daughter of a commoner. One day she happened to surprize me just as I had taken the hand of Alicia—just as I was pressing it to my lips;—her anger was visible—she immediately closeted me, and I was made to undergo the penance of an hour's lecture on

the necessity there was of supporting my dignity—of observing a proper distance to inferiors. I endeavoured to defend myself by opposing some of her arguments. Opposition was in vain—she protested, in a tone not to be discredited, that she would send Alicia back to her father, if she ever again saw such a degree of intimacy between us as she had just observed with astonishment and confusion. Her suspicions first taught me to deceive.

It is easy to avoid a danger of which we are hourly warned. My mother's reproofs learnt me caution—my circumspection availed—I was no longer suspected. 'Faith! on cool deliberation, I cannot help thinking I should never have carried my passion to a height

height so romantic, but from her Lady-ship's opposition.

A note from the Duke de Deni interrupts my narrative—he presses me to come to him this evening. By the next mail you shall have the remainder of my wise adventure.

LETTER V.

From the same to the same.

Paris

I SHALL omit saying any thing of the delightful week I have spent with the Duke and his friends at the Château de Deni. I am impatient to bring you back to that house on the north road, where Miss Selwin and myself were overtaken by my father.

He partook of our slight repast—a refreshment absolutely necessary after the fatigues he had undergone—and then

then led Alicia to his carriage, commanding me to follow. Contention would have been fruitless—I made a virtue of necessity. My readiness to obey him put him into so good a humour, that he said a thousand tender, obliging things, both to Alicia and myself, as we measured back the stages of our unfortunate peregrination. His condescending kindness had a great effect on Alicia—she recovered her former vivacity—she talked of numerous trifles—she talked with so much indifference, as I own to you, filled me with amazement. I examined every turn of her countenance—I examined it accurately, to find out the sensibility which I imagined to be concealed under that appearance of cheerfulness she had, I hoped, only assumed. Not a silent tear—a sigh half suppressed—

a down-cast look—not even one serious moment, answered my inquiries. I asked from her heart a principle with which I now perceive she was entirely unacquainted—a principle I could not dispense with in the mind of a woman who was to share with her Bromsgrove every pleasing—every painful event that fortune, in her various disposition of affairs, might portion for him. Now was the first time I observed this deficiency—a deficiency which never before appeared, where her attachment to me was concerned. I felt mortified—I cannot describe my chagrin. I could have reproached her, but for the presence of my father: —pride too was another motive, perhaps the strongest, which prevented me from shewing the disgust I was struck with at her insensible, unfeeling behaviour.

viour. I shrunk myself up in a corner, rested my head against the side of the carriage, and sat sullenly silent—though not inattentive. My passion had taken too deep a root to be easily eradicated; though displeased beyond expression at the levity she betrayed, my anger was of a very short duration. I continued silent, it is true, the last ten miles of our journey; but my contemplations were not tinctured with resentment, or my looks with sullenness after the first quarter of an hour. Like other violent emotions, the spirit of resentment evaporated—it was momentary. A far different motive occasioned my not joining afterwards in their conversation—I had forgot her having offended me—I was recollecting every instance she had given me of susceptibility—I was suffering

the most poignant concern at the disappointment of my hopes—it was so severe, I could ill support it—I was almost mad with vexation.

When we stopped in St. James's Square, my agitation could no longer be restrained. My father first alighted, and went into the house, I really believe, to give me an opportunity of speaking to Miss Selwin unrestrained by his presence. My hand trembled as I offered my assistance to help her from the carriage—I pressed her's to my bosom—I whispered in a broken voice, Support yourself, my dearest! remember, on your steadiness, on your affection, depends the life of your Bromsgrove! Miss Selwin drew her hand from me with more of disdain than apprehension in her manner. We may be

be observed, my Lord!—it is time to have done with folly. I have seen enough to convince me what madness it would be, were I to give up your mother's protection, to place myself again under that of your Lordship. A pistol-shot from the hand of my friend—even from your hand—could alone have given me a shock equal to her unexpected reply; it was a ball for which I was not prepared. I reeled back some paces, struck to the soul with astonishment. Before I could recover my senses, or my voice, sufficiently to ask her reasons for an alteration so sudden in her sentiments, she slid by me into the hall; she left me in the most absolute state of confusion. Good God! cried I, rather chusing to take the blame upon myself than lay it upon her—good God! what have I done

done—I have offended her—my silence on the road has offended her—she will never pardon the caprice I have betrayed. Full of this idea, cursing my own negligence, I flew towards her—I besought her to hear me but for one instant. She looked as if inclined to grant my request, when the groom of the chambers came with orders from my mother, that we should instantly attend her in the drawing-room. I prevailed on Alicia to give me her hand—we ascended the stairs together—nor would I quit it any more, till I had myself presented her at the bar of her tribunal. I imagined, not without reason, this attention would at least the better enable her to support her trial. I made no enquiries if her Ladyship was alone; the delicacy of our situation forbad a supposition to the contrary.

contrary. Judge—if it is possible for you to judge—the immensity of my surprise, when the door was thrown open, to find Lady Derwent surrounded by a group of varnished coquettes, and plaistered coxcombs, in all the various attitudes of devouring curiosity. I was afterwards informed, that every one of those idle people had been collected together for the purpose of waiting our return; and had been made to understand on what occasion they were invited. Far from being intimidated by this ridiculous assembly, before whom my conduct, and that of Miss Selwin, was to be arraigned, I was never more myself—never found myself master of more resolution. I whispered Alicia, who trembled exceedingly—I begged she would exert her fortitude, and depend on my steadiness—then led

led her towards my mother. I brushed carelessly through the polite multitude, who were all standing to receive the two culprits. Is this, Madam, said I, as I approached her—is this the reception you prepare for Miss Selwin, and for a son who has unhappily fallen under your displeasure? Was it necessary to have my actions canvassed by a world who cannot regulate their own? I looked round me with an air of resentment. Every spectator male and female hung their heads. Was it generous or humane, Madam, to heighten the confusion Miss Selwin feels at having offended you? Was it kind to add to it, by exposing her thus publicly to the eyes of envy, the darts of malice, and the tongue of slander? I looked round again; there was not one head erect in the whole circle.

My

My mother—how shall I define the rage of my mother!—it is not to be defined—but it was to be seen, felt, and understood. Her face was inflamed—fury darted from her eyes—her whole frame was convulsed by passion—passion even compelled her to silence, though this last most insupportable consequence she struggled more than once to get the better of. Seeing her so much agitated, I took a bottle of salts, which Alicia held in her hand, and presented them respectfully to my mother—I meant this well, but she did not take it as well meant—she dashed it on the floor. I am sorry, Madam, to see you so much disordered; I could have wished your Ladyship's distress had not been quite so public. Her friends could not pass by the broad hint I gave them to be gone. Decency demanded

demanded they should shorten their visit—they all arose—there was a general move in the assembly.

Lady Derwent, who till then had sat immoveably fixed, started also, and came forward. She recovered the use of her tongue. Impertinent, insolent wretch! she exclaimed,—how dare you treat my company so rudely? Sit down, Ladies; sit down, I intreat you;—sit down, my Lords; you positively shall not stir a step. They obeyed her with readiness, particularly the women, their curiosity was not half satisfied. Answer me one question, my young presuming Lord! Am I, or am I not, the mistress of my own family? Forgive me, Madam, if I answer your Ladyship's question by asking another. Has your supreme authority ever been disputed?

disputed? Never, never, Madam, not even by my father. My temper was risen to such a height, I could not conceal its warmth. I could not help saying this, had my life been at stake. My blood boiled over at being scolded like a child, before so many puppies. She answered me, with a glance of more than indignation; your father would not have presumed to use me thus—he would not have presumed to prescribe to me the day, the time, or hour, when I should receive my friends. My dear mother! I mean not to prescribe, but, on the present occasion, my own feelings inform me the interposition of strangers might have been dispensed with. Boy! boy! your assurance is intolerable; it is not to be borne with patience; the whole world does not contain so many spectators as I would, if possible, make the witnesses

witnesses of your mean, grovelling inclinations. She paused to take breath. The whole world does not contain so many spectators as I would, if possible, make the witnesses of the diabolical arts of that ambitious girl, (pointing to Alicia.) Let go her hand, Bromsgrove—I charge you this moment let it go, or your obstinacy will drive me to frenzy. To your commands, Madam, for the present, I relinquish it. Forgive me, dear Miss Selwin, ardently kissing the hand I quitted; a time will come—it is not far off—when I shall reclaim. Here I was interrupted, you will guess by whom. Hold, hold, my Lord! that time shall never come—you dare not, sure, you dare not raise an idea so hateful—so tormenting. But why torment myself, added she with assumed calmness, accompanied

nied with a smile which enforced the full meaning of her words; for though your Lordship is disposed to make me the sport of your wanton raillery—though you feel a joy in tearing my heart asunder with suppositions of so disgusting a nature—yet I cannot, my Lord, imagine—indeed I cannot, that you have passions different from other men, which once satisfied are seldom carried to such excess as to occasion family dissentions. I know the world better.—I laugh at your threats—Alicia has been too long in your possession.

The horror I felt at so gross a reflection on the character of Miss Selwin was sudden in its effect: the dear injured creature's face had been all this time covered with her handkerchief—her audible

audible sobs, her unremitting tears, now called for my tenderest exertion. I flew towards her, regardless of all my mother's efforts to withold me. Throwing myself at the feet of Alicia, I intreated her forgiveness for being, though innocently, the cause of aspersions so scandalous—of an imputation equally injurious to her as dishonourable to me—I told her, that had it proceeded from any other mouth I might have been less hurt—from any other it should have been followed by my severest vengeance. I almost raved, because it was not in my power, to redress the wrongs—the cruel wrongs—done to her fame, her unsullied virtue—to the purity of which virtue I invoked heaven itself to witness. I went further in the same humiliating posture, with more love, tenderness, and passion, than

than I ever before experienced. I fervently intreated she would wave all objections, and openly, in the face of my family, give me a lawful right to vindicate her innocence. Alicia made me no answer except by a deep sigh. In a different manner were my proposals received by Lady Derwent; who, transported with rage, vexation, and disappointment, did not restrain her tokens of dislike within the confines of language. I will not swear that her hand was not lifted to strike me. With an action of fury she tore Miss Selwin from my hold; and crying out, this is too—too much, she hurried her from the room. I should have followed—my heart went with Miss Selwin—but was stopped at the door by my father, who, I suppose, had from choice avoided the disagreeable scene above stairs till

till the tempest subsided. He took me with him to his closet. My agitation sensibly affected him;—he embraced me with affection. My dear Bromsgrove, said this good indulgent parent, I guess by the affliction in which I find you overwhelmed, that the interview you have had with your mother has been a disagreeable one. My answer was not a negative. He desired I would give him the particulars. I obeyed his commands with precision: —such fathers as Lord Derwent have an indisputable right to the unlimited confidence of their children. I did not conceal a thought from him—I complained of the usage with which I had been treated; but more bitterly, that the defenceless innocence of my Alicia (heaven! is she not Mortington's Alicia?) had been so barbarously,

so

so publicly, assassinated. I confessed the sense I had of his Lordship's great goodness, and hoped he would authorise the resolution I had taken, never to be the husband of any other woman but Miss Selwin. He betrayed no marks of displeasure at the freedom with which I ventured to declare my sentiments;—on the contrary, he replied in the kindest accent imaginable—After your going such lengths with Alicia, I should think you acted dishonourably in giving her up;—she is, I believe, a good girl;—whatever objections I might have formed against your connection with her are all removed, both in justice to her, as well as from affection to you—I shall think of them no more. In a few years you will be your own master; when that period arrives, you have not only my

consent, but you have my advice with it, that you should marry Alicia. I kissed his hand. My dear—dear Lord, is there no chance, no probability, that I might attain to this happiness sooner? four years!— must I wait four years? what an age to look forward! He smiled. I can allow for your impatience, son; I once felt the same kind of impatience. He sighed: that sigh was expressive. Bromsgrove, if your happiness depended on me, I hope you are sensible I should not be its enemy. You know your mother's temper. [The devil's in it if my mother has not given me cause to know her temper. I did not say this; I only thought it.] The violence of her resentments, continued my father, will not suffer me to interfere at present; but, could I prevail on you to oblige me in granting one request

quest I have to propose, matters may be accommodated sooner than you expect. What can you propose, my Lord, to which I am not disposed to shew a ready, cheerful obedience? Make once more, my dear boy, the tour of France—proceed, if you please, to Italy—visit Rome; and, by the time you return, I will take such measures, that I pledge my honour you shall meet with no further obstruction. After I have tried all possible means to bring my wife over, if she continues perverse, I promise to pursue a certain, though slow, method of putting you into possession of my late brother's estate, and will accomplish all this in your absence. I fell at his feet. I was elate with joy—my acknowledgments were almost incoherent. It was

determined I should set out the next morning for Dover.

My mother's step, directed towards the closet, broke up our conference rather abruptly. We vanished at a side door, just in time to get out of the way of her intended favour.

On enquiring of the servants for Miss Selwin, to whom I wanted to communicate the agreeable prospect breaking on us, I was told she went off in a post-chaise about half an hour before, attended by Lady Derwent's woman; and that her Ladyship saw her to the door of the carriage. I was neither grieved nor surprised at this account. I concluded she was sent to Selwin Cottage, and rejoiced that she had escaped

caped the tyranny of my mother. Her sudden departure did not alter my plan. I had engaged my word to my father, that I would leave England the next day—I could not refuse making this promise—and I resolved not to risk his displeasure by breaking it. I gave the necessary orders for my departure, and retired to my chamber, where I spent the greatest part of the night in writing to Alicia. I performed this task in terms so very explanatory, that I have the vanity to believe, if she had ever received it, she would not at this time have been the wife of Mortington.

Since I received your last, I have examined my own servant, to whose care I intrusted this letter, and he has confessed to me, that being very busy

in preparing for my journey, he had sent it to the office by my mother's Maitre d'Hotel. I have not the smallest doubt remaining, but this letter was intercepted by her command. That every thing happens for the best, I am now as firmly persuaded as any disciple of a certain modern author. I repeat it again and again, every thing does happen for the best. The wife of Mortington may make Mortington happy. The wife of Mortington would have made Bromsgrove miserable.

Events—past events—I endeavour, I strive, to drive from my memory. I do not wish Alicia to repent her ingratitude—her irresolution—but if she should repent, it will not surprise me.

I believe

I believe I have omitted to tell you, that Lord Mortington made one of my mother's assembly the evening of my return with Miss Selwin. I conclude from thence his Lordship's doubts, if he ever had doubts, were satisfied, in regard to her character—my behaviour at the time could not be misunderstood. I could not have acted, as I did then, for a woman of easy virtue. I am not sorry I have cleared her innocence; tho' in doing it, I in all probability lost her for ever. Never, as my supposed mistress, could Miss Selwin have been Lady Mortington; or, indeed the wife of any other man who had the smallest regard to the honour of his family. Another piece of justice I performed, which was, to clear her from suspicions in the minds of her parents,

as I had already personally acquitted her in the eyes of the world.—I wrote them from Dover; which letter was accompanied by another to Miss Selwin— took a decent leave of my mother—a more affectionate one of my father. I turned my back upon Britain; and for the comfortable companion of my voyage, carried with me those tender hopes to which the good Earl had given me his sanction. Alicia has bestowed herself on another; and I now bid defiance to the arts of her whole sex.

Having fully obeyed your commands; if, my dear West, you should think any acknowledgments due to the labours of my pen, pay them in kind, and neglect not to entertain me with the minutest manœuvre which

may

may happen in the family of Lord Mortington, to the fickle mistress of which—my heart tells me—I shall not, at least for a long—long time, be indifferent.

LETTER VI.

Lady Mortington to Lady Alice Sinclear.

Mortington-Castle.

SUSPEND your judgment, dear Lady Alice; and scorn to be governed by the opinion of a world whom you have hitherto more frequently led than followed. Because it happens to be the fashion to condemn the step I have taken; because I say, it happens to be the fashion—must your Ladyship—whose sentiments are enlarged by a general

general knowledge of mankind—must you join in my condemnation.

I might have been a Countess, you tell me, without marrying a man old enough to be my grandfather. You mistake Lady Alice; my Lord is but just turned of five and forty—his complexion, I confess, has suffered from wind and weather—but what is complexion? You assure me he is of a capricious humour—that it is ten to one if he ever permits me to visit the capital again after my first exhibition. You even take pains to convince me, that this small indulgence will proceed more from a motive of shewing his own munificence and grandeur, than to flatter my inclinations. All this may be true. Suppose it true—of what consequence is that to me?

I warrant I find a way to manage him; what care I for his humour or his caprice! I should be glad if your Ladyship could inform me in what shape they can possibly affect me. Young as I am, I have had so much of theory, that the practical part will not be in the least difficult. How does Lady Derwent—how does a thousand other Ladies of our acquaintance—manage their Lords? surely, my influence is not so very inferior, that I should ever be afraid of Lord Mortington! If he chuses to be cross, ill-tempered, and refractory, I shall take care and expose him handsomely. I did not marry for love, Lady Alice, for which reason, I do not think myself obliged to conceal the fault of my husband. Was it really certain, that this would actually be my last campaign in town,

the

the preparations going forward, to make it glorious beyond a precedent, would, I positively think, enable me with tolerable patience to doze away the rest of my life in the country.

My appearance, splendid as it will be, is but a second cause for the exultation I shall feel, in breaking upon the world from behind the cloud which has for a certain time obscured my brightness. My first—my dearest consideration is the mortification Lady Derwent must unavoidably be stung with, to see the ambitious girl—an epithet you may remember she honoured me with on a particular occasion—to see this ambitious girl take place of her haughty Ladyship. O Lady Alice! Lady Alice! how does my heart beat —what are my emotions—when I think

think of my approaching triumph! You cannot inform me—I cannot myself define them—they carry my imaginations to a flight so prodigious, that when I look up to my Lord as the source of my soul's best gratification, I can see no wrinkles in his face—will allow no disparity in our ages. To behold him in that point of view, he has youth—he has beauty—he has elegance—in short, he has every thing that constitutes perfection. Your Ladyship may laugh, but I am serious—I have not a wish but will be accomplished in the punishment of that pride, that cruelty, that insolence, which could delight in making me the subject of public ridicule. I will not drop Lady Derwent's acquaintance: no; my revenge would then be but half complete. I must

get

get her in my power, to torment her the more effectually. I will daily, hourly, blaze upon her with the highest airs of superiority I can possibly assume—I will give her so many dazzling proofs of my importance, as shall act upon her envious mind like poison.

Lady Derwent's fate is fixed. She shall—positively she shall—die the death of vexation; a less rigorous sentence cannot appease my just vengeance.

Interrupted by the dinner bell!—It is quite odious—dine at four—how intolerable that we must conform to common customs; or why, in short, are we obliged to eat at all? Our souls are air; why cannot our bodies be supported by air also?

CONTINUATION.

CONTINUATION.

Tell me no more I should have been the wife of Lord Bromsgrove. If this is your creed, I heartily disavow it. The wife of Lady Derwent's son! I shudder at the bare idea. In escaping his Lordship, I have escaped a life of bondage: there was a time, indeed, when I was foolish enough to be of another opinion—that time is passed—it was a hundred years ago. I am now wiser by experience. If I had given my hand to the son, I should have been governed by the mother—a government I would not again groan under for the whole universe. I am now my own mistress, and at liberty to assert my independence. Do you—can you—any longer wonder at the precipitancy of my choice? What woman, injured as I have been, would not do as I have done? Upbraid

Upbraid me no more, I beseech you, with the noble, tender, disinterested behaviour of Bromsgrove, in a late horrid scene; too horrid for recollection—and of which your Ladyship was a spectator. You saw the confusion—the shame—that overwhelmed me, when disgracefully hurried by her furious Ladyship from a circle of my acquaintance, all open-mouthed to propagate my humiliating story. Every one of these scandal-devourers shall be excepted in my act of grace—all but my dear Alice, whose anxiety for the fate of her friend, and not mischievous curiosity, brought her to St. James's Square that black evening.

Perhaps you will tell me there is another whom I have already forgiven. I beg your Ladyship's pardon. I chose,

it

it is true, a Lord—not a Master—from that memorable assembly; but does such an election by any means infer he is not, at a proper season, to partake of my resentment? Observe, at a proper season; for at present his Lordship is of too great consequence, in the plan of my operations, for me to carve out his time or mode of punishment. My spirits are in perfect harmony. Pray none of your very grave—very wise admonitions to lower their standard. If I was not well convinced of your friendship, I should think your whole letter calculated to give me vexation. Such vile comparisons—such old-fashioned morals—such out-of-the-way ideas—such teazing reflections—where can you have picked up all this nonsense? Let me hear no more of it, I intreat you. For the future, write to

me

me from the dictates of your own liberal heart and lively imaginations; I know that heart is exactly like my own; I know, had you been in my situation, you would have acted exactly as I have acted.

Lord Bromsgrove I once preferred to all the splendid rivals that opposed him. I confess too, his merit—his accomplishments—together with his many personal attractions—engaged from me something like esteem; but I will not allow he has any reason of complaint for my giving the preference to another. Disagreeable circumstances, proceeding too from his own family, obliged me to change my intentions—I was going to say, inclinations—the word I first used will do as well—perhaps better.

Lady

ginable?—Are there not various other concurring circumstances? Why had he not come after me to Selwin Cottage? He wanted even the spirit of Lord Mortington, and yet Bromsgrove never before appeared to want spirit. His mamma chid him, I suppose; upon which the baby puts his finger into his eye, and goes abroad for fear of the rod. Vastly pretty—vastly fond—vastly spirited—it must be confessed!

He wrote to Mr. Selwin from Dover. I dare say, he did my character justice—I was not told so—but I guessed it from seeing the long gloomy countenances by which I was surrounded, taken up an inch or two, (after the receipt of his letter) and now and then enlivened by a smile. He condescended to honour me, also, at the same time,

time, with an elaborate epistle; it was so long—so tedious—so sentimental—so little to the purpose—that I actually yawned more than once in running it over. You are to observe, Lady Alice, I was fixed when I received it—already, in my own discreet ideas, I was determined Countess of Mortington. Had it arrived twenty hours sooner, I don't know what might have happened. He talked of another letter, which he had written from London, the very evening on which I took my disgraceful flight towards the burying-place of my forefathers. He talked, I say—it was mere talk—no such letter ever fell under my inspection.

Now, tell me, suppose I had accepted his disinterested proposals, as your Ladyship is pleased to call them; sup-

pose I had given him my hand in open defiance of the proud peeress; tell me, in what my power would have been enlarged? A title and poverty have no chams for me. But I might, you say, have waited till he became master of his fortune, consequently of his actions. That would have been too ridiculous. I am no admirer of your new doctrine, Lady Alice. A girl of my youth, and as the world thinks more than commonly indebted to nature, had no time to throw away on dull expectation---perhaps, after all, to find myself disappointed. How often have you and I ridiculed Bab Hastings, for the very self-same step, to which you in your late acquired wisdom, would have recommended me! It is impossible, morally impossible, you could be serious. Well; you are a teazing creature to

put

put such odd notions into one's head, when you know too the deed is done —that I am irrecoverably disposed of. But, as I was saying, Bab Hastings; why, Bab Hastings might have blazed in all the lustre of a court—her infatuation for the Marquis made her slight the many opportunities fortune threw into her way. A seven years engagement—it makes one sick—what lover's passion ever held out to a period so unconscionable?

Bab was deep-read in romances, her head must be absolutely turned by them, or the idea would never have entered into it, that such a thing was possible. The Duke, I hear, has at last left the Marquis at liberty; and fame adds poor Bab is forsaken. All this is quite natural: I really pity the

poor thing—she has set me a lesson of wisdom, on which you see I have improved, by acting diametrically opposite to herself. Not another word at this time, Lady Alice, my fingers ache in your service. Heigh ho!

CONTINUATION.

Lord Mortington may not have the agrément—the agreeables—of Bromsgrove. Take notice, Lady Alice, I am not so unfashionable a being to speak or even think of my husband with partiality.

I repeat, Lord Mortington may not have the other's agrément; but here I draw the balance. Possession and reversion;—for possession, every thing—reversion, nothing. The world has infinite

infinite gratifications to bestow on its votaries, that will not bear suspending on the cobweb thread of uncertainty. I shall not pay your Ladyship's understanding so wretched a compliment, as to ask if in your opinion my reasons for being what I am are not invincible.

As the friend of my bosom—the partner of my heart—to you I will confess a truth—I do not call it a secret, because I imagine it can be no secret to yourself, or any of my young acquaintance. This truth is, that Lord Mortington was not the man of my choice—but the choice of my prudence.

Three weeks before I laid hold of my present honours, his addresses were detestable—his very name odious to

me. Am I not an example, how great a victory is to be gained by resolution? What a striking instance have I given? The unfortunate blight on my character left me no time to deliberate—my fame must at any rate be rescued from the hand of malice, under whose murderous touch it would have been most horridly massacred.

To know myself innocent was not enough—such confined knowledge might have supported me in a cloister, or, what is as bad, a country retirement. Of what use is self acquittance? it would not have gained me a reception to those fashionable circles, in which I have existed from infancy, and which it would have been worse than dying a thousand deaths to have relinquished. Lord Mortington was the

the only one, of all my former lovers, who was convinced by Bromsgrove's public vindication of my virtue. In two days after I was disgracefully sent away, his Lordship followed me to Selwin Cottage. My situation was then very different from what it had been—I saw with other eyes; I heard with other ears; and his renewed proposals were now a cordial to my suffering pride.

At this juncture, I had new difficulties to overcome. What these difficulties were, I will tell you by and by.

Mr. and Mrs. Selwin—father and mother, you know, are terms quite abolished in fashionable life; though I must now and then make use of them, ridiculous as they are, that I may not tire you with tautology; so pray grant

me your indulgence on that score, if I sometimes transgress against the established laws of politeness.

Mr. and Mrs. Selwin are what are called in the country, mighty good kind of people; a sort of character your Ladyship must be intirely unacquainted with, as it is not to be met, at least I have never met with it, in that distinguished rank in which birth and fortune have placed you. Their ideas are totally foreign from ours—I mean the ideas of mighty good kind of people—as foreign as light is to darkness.

Would you believe—can you believe —I speak upon my honour, without partiality—my father and mother, though they fall under the denomination

tion of mighty good kind of people, though they have lived, or rather vegetated, the best of their days, surrounded by woods, lawns, and rivers, remote from all the dear delights of the metropolis—yet they have in their whole deportment a certain grace, a certain ease, a certain dignity, a politeness of manners, to be found only in courts, or in persons of the first distinction. All these advantages, which Mr. and Mrs. Selwin possess, superlatively, are mixed with such queer, odd, out-of-the-way opinions, opinions to which I was so totally unaccustomed, that I could never feel myself at home (if you will allow the expression) at such seasons as I was permitted to visit them at Selwin Cottage.

Had I, like my sister, been bred up under their tuition, no doubt I should have entered into all their dull sentiments—so different from my present comprehensions—so widely different from those in which I have been nursed. Margaretta imbibed them all—Margaretta has made what little folks call a good match—she has married one of your sober people—a man who gives her rank a degree above communality.

Education fitted me for higher views. I should scarce have known how to move in a sphere so circumscribed—a Baronet's Lady! Oh! how ridiculous! how laughable! You always told me I should be a Countess: and, cost what it would, you see I was resolved to make good your prediction.

Where

Where am I running? I meant to have told you, without preamble, that when Lord Mortington laid his proposals before Mr. and Mrs. Selwin, though greatly to my advantage—greatly to the honour of their family, they gave so cold an assent, as almost amounted to rejection. Their objections to my receiving the hand he offered, plainly proceeded from those very whimsical points of honour, which you and I, and half the world besides, hold merely ideal. A thought strikes me. I have nothing else to do—take these objections then—take them in their original dress.

Dialogue FASHION, though not a fashionable dialogue.

Mr. Selwin, (haughtily) I have been talking with Lord Mortington, Alicia. I suppose you are not to be informed on what subject.

Dear Sir, I—I know his Lordship does me the honour to---

Mr. Selwin, shaking his head, interrupts—I am not to learn, child, that his Lordship's proposals are infinitely above my expectations---infinitely above the expectations of my daughter---[mortifying to the last degree] but my daughter [and he looked me full in the face] cannot accept those proposals either with honour or propriety.

Have you told his Lordship this, Sir? (peevishly.)

Mr.

Mr. Selwin, (mistaking the meaning of my words) I referred him to you, Alicia; your question leads me to conclude, that you are not insensible to the step it is necessary you should take.

Have you any objections, Sir, to Lord Mortington?

I have many objections to Lord Mortington's addressing you, but none to Lord Mortington. A man, with half his Lordship's advantages, a man more suitable to your age and disposition, and at a more proper season, I should not command you to refuse. I hate disparities so glaring---it is not the grandeur---it is the propriety, the happiness, of my children, I consult. Lord Mortington waits you in the drawing-

drawing-room: go to him---it is better his dismission should come from yourself than from me.

Here my mother took me by the hand. Dearest Alicia, do as your father desires you. Why are you silent, my child! may we not expect this instance of duty from our Alicia? Dear, dear love, restore yourself, by one little sacrifice, to the hearts of your parents. She wept---she turned aside her head ---she almost reduced me to sobbing, but I was steady to my purpose.

Indeed, Sir---indeed, Madam---I cannot reject Lord Mortington---I have already promised---to be his.

My father---(his eyes flashing fire) I have done with you, Miss Selwin. He went

went towards the door. My mother stopped him. Stay, stay, my dear Mr. Selwin, stay a moment longer, I intreat you. Alicia will not, I know she will not, disobey you.

How, Madam, can you answer for so imprudent a girl, who, without your or my confidence, presumed to encourage the advances of one lover—even dared to elope with him, and now is so ready to receive another. He threw himself into a chair, without condescending to cast one look at his undutiful daughter.

Recollect yourself, Alicia; (and again Mrs. Selwin took my hand) consider the justness of your father's accusation. What is become of that attachment you have so lately, so very lately,

lately, so very openly avowed for Lord Bromsgrove? an attachment that has hurried you so very far beyond the bounds of discretion. Delicacy forbids your giving, at this period, those vows to Lord Mortington, which were so near being given to another. I would not encourage in your breast the hope of any future connection with that other; but you certainly have not the consent of your heart in the choice you are about to make. Recollect—reflect—on the noble generosity with which he supported you; with which he defended your character, in the presence of his mother, and a gaping censorious multitude.

Does not this demand some return of gratitude? Can you so immediately give your hand to his rival? My dear

dear child, Lord Bromsgrove has not deserved this treatment. It would be an insult to him; an offence against decency.

I blushed excessively; I felt my face glow; I felt queerly; but still I was steady. My dear Sir, my dear Madam, how you distress me! I know I have been faulty, yet it is impossible I should give up Lord Mortington. I have been engaged to him ever since he followed me down. Followed you down! echoed my father—(starting up in a violent passion) ever since he followed you down, Madam! how long has that been, pray? There was no occasion for answering this question: he knew as well as I could inform him. Ever since he followed you down!—mighty satisfactory;—(he drew out his

his watch) let me see: then you have been engaged to him just nine-and-twenty hours; is it not so, Miss Selwin? I dropped an assenting courtesy; I really felt queerly again. And eight-and-forty hours before, I think you was on the road to Scotland with ——

I interrupted him. Spare me Sir; spare me, I beseech you. I have been very silly; I am sorry for it; but indeed, I may be full as happy with Lord Mortington, as I could have been with Lord Bromsgrove.

Enough—enough of scribbling, in all conscience, for the present.

CONTINUATION.

CONTINUATION.

The above were some of the many links, which composed a chain of argument used to draw me from my purpose. I say some of the many; for our secret council did not break up in more than half an hour after the sketch I have given you.

The austerity, the severity, with which my father delivered himself, intimidated; but my mother's gentle remonstrances, mingled with tears of tenderness, almost overcame me. I experienced a something at my heart, which I cannot give a name to, because till that moment I had never been acquainted with a similar sensation.

Whatever

Whatever it was, it did not remain long my visitor: it vanished when I considered how possible it was that if I missed this opportunity I might languish out my days in obscurity and dwindle into a mere country gentlewoman. These considerations, Lady Alice, who could withstand? not I truly; I wept; I prayed; I conquered; and am Countess of Mortington.

To what a length have I written! three months ago my time was differently filled up—even to you I could not then have afforded more than half a dozen lines. But as I hate rural scenes and rural amusements---as I do not intend to spoil my Lord by indulging him with too much of my company, my hours of course, instead of flying rapidly as usual, are now clogged with

with the heavy chain of leaden stupidity; I absolutely tire out my spirits, whilst I watch their creeping motion.

No thanks are due to me; I am obliged to kill time—could I have found a more agreeable mode of doing it, that mode I should have embraced with as much eagerness as I have shewn to acquaint your Ladyship with the strange, the wonderfully strange, revolutions I have lately experienced.

But this I would have my dear Lady Alice believe, that, amidst the most momentous employments, I would always endeavour to find a moment to assure her of my friendship.

LETTER

LETTER VII.

Lady Nelson to Mrs. Selwin.

Montpellier,

THE last packet from England not only enriched me with letters from you, my dearest mother, containing accounts of your health, and that of my dear respectable father; but also brought me one from my sister, who seems highly satisfied with her situation, and assures me, with more than common warmth, of her affection. How have I wept! how have I washed with my tears the affecting distresses you have recited!

I cannot

I cannot doubt but Lady Mortington will, one day, be a comfort to her family. As a wife, will not all that flightiness occasioned by youth, beauty, admiration, and too great love of dissipation, naturally subside?

Had my sister wanted good sense, or good nature, I should not have entertained the sanguine hopes I now do in her favour. I am sure she has many virtues, however they may have hitherto been obscured. With whatever violence she has suffered her passions or resentments to run away with her reason, depend on it, my dear Madam, a little sober experience will bring it back. A daughter of your's cannot be unworthy by nature—though her conduct may not have been faultless from education. For God's sake let not this

this affair, which is now blown over, prey upon your spirits and undermine your health, so very—very valuable both to my father and your children.

Time will reconcile my excellent parents to what is passed, and Lady Mortington's future behaviour compensate for all the vexation Alicia Selwin has occasioned them.

Sir William's complaints are much abated. He has received every advantage, from the air of this place, my most sanguine wishes could have suggested; and I am in all respects as happy as it is possible for me to be at so great a distance from Selwin Cottage. The hour is at no great distance when I shall be restored to your embraces.

Sir

Sir William is not only the most amiable of men, but the most tender —the most affectionate of husbands— every sacrifice I could make him, in return, would be insufficient to testify the grateful sense I have of his goodness. That of relinquishing your dear society was by far the strongest proof I could possibly give him of my love or of my duty.

I have often heard it arraigned, that the human heart can be possessed but of one ardent attachment—that a wife, truly devoted to her husband, forgets the ties of nature, or at least finds them slackened by a superior affection. I despise this argument—I detest it—it is mean, narrow, selfish—I am myself, from experience, able to bear testimony that it is erroneous.

To say that I love Sir William would poorly express my sentiments—I adore —I doat on him to distraction; yet the strength of this passion is so far from suppressing or lessening the tender regard I have always borne to my beloved parents, that, if possible, I every moment feel it augmented in proportion as my views of felicity are enlarged.

We have received a thousand civilities—a thousand attentions, from the polite inhabitants of this country, which have rendered our peregrinations exceedingly agreeable. Amongst our most valuable friends, we rank the Count Aluredus, a knight of Malta, brother to the Duke de Deni. Like ourselves, and like many others, he comes here in pursuit of health; being

being just returned from an expedition of six years in weak a declining state.

As it is no uncommon thing, in a place like this, for invalids (from a kind of sympathy) to form early connections, so our acquaintance with the Count began soon after his arrival, which is since improved into so great a degree of intimacy, that he is almost become one of our family.

From many hints he has let drop in our social hours, I can gather, that he is on no good footing with his brother, and that the melancholy which predominates in his disposition arises from the coolness between them. Our Count is perfectly independent—he wants no pecuniary favours—his own fortunes are splendid, but still he is not

happy—his disappointments then must have proceeded from other sources—his mind is above pecuniary considerations. Whatever may be the cause of his sorrows, you know his mind is full of the subject. He sighs often—a tear creeps down his cheek—he perpetually talks of his brother, without appearing sensible that he makes him the constant theme of his conversation; but if the Duke de Deni happens to be mentioned by any other person, you see his whole shattered frame in universal agitation.

Alas! I fear the air will have but little efficacy in his disorder. If he would find a cure, he must seek it in a reconciliation with the Duke—from all I see, by all I can judge, there is no other remedy, and that I am apprehensive his heart will never submit to solicit.

I interest

I interest myself so much in whatever concerns the Count, that I forget I am speaking to you, my dear mother, of one to whom you are an absolute stranger. You will pardon this inconsistency, when I tell you Sir William has entertained for him the warmest regard, and that my own veneration does not fall short of his for this excellent man.

When I spoke of the Count Aluredus, I spoke of him as though his worth could not but have reached the dear, secluded, peaceful, shades of Selwin Cottage; as though it must inevitably have found its way to your ear. Reflection tells me the absurdity: though late, I will set about rectifying my omission by introducing to your better acquaintance this charming knight of Malta.

I might not have expressed myself in these terms of admiration, if he had been a younger man; but sixty-two or three (which is the age he appears to be) banishes restraint from my pen. There are charms in age even superior to those of youth, and it is to them we may innocently devote our admiration. A prude may give the appellation of charming to our friend. The Count's age, if he is as old as I guess him to be, is not concealed under a healthy florid countenance. His age is to be traced in every line—in every feature—of a face, the characters of which are those of tender sensibility, and the finest traits of humanity.

These characters of sensibility—of humanity—are constantly supplied with

with fresh vigour from the resources of a mind enriched with the substance of those virtues, the shadows of which are so visible on the surface. What an assemblage of unfading graces bloom on his emaciated visage, furrowed with the ravages of sickness, and rendered more venerable by the few silver hairs, of which time has sparingly left him the possessor.

His person, though bending towards the earth, has in it something so noble —something so interesting—as requires an abler pencil than that of a mere dauber to do it justice. I feel, but cannot describe, the effect of awe —of love—of reverence—with which it strikes the beholder.

Such is the honourable, worn-out casket in which are deposited infinite

perfections, and which, I fear, it will not long be able to contain. This biting melancholy, that preys continually on his mind, cannot but have the most fatal effects on a constitution so shattered as the Count Aluredus's. Our whole time is devoted to him. We study his ease; we find out various ways of amusing him; we are never tired of giving him proofs of the sincerity with which we are attached to him. Our little attentions are not disregarded. He receives them with visible pleasure.

A written message is this moment delivered us from our excellent Count. He intreats Sir William and myself will give him the satisfaction of calling at his lodgings, being too much indisposed to wait on us at our own; and adds,

adds, he wishes much to consult us on an affair that has greatly disturbed him. Sir William is all impatience to obey the summons.

The packet sails to-morrow. I must close this to attend him, after bidding my dearest parents a thousand tender adieus. I shall write again in a few days by a gentleman on his return to Britain.

LETTER VIII.

Lady Mortington to Lady Alice Sinclear.

Mortington-Castle.

FIVE weeks ago I complained to your Ladyship of the tedious insipidity under which I was compelled to languish. Since that time I have known the most disagreeable reverse—tired to death—fatigued out of my very senses with visitors from every corner of the country. I could prefer silence and my pen—infinitely prefer them—

to

to the society of such odd bodies as have crouded my house to shew their fine cloaths, and compliment Lord Mortington on the acquisition he has given to their neighbourhood.

Goths and Vandals! Horrid idea! The thought of living amongst them more than three months in the year, would absolutely suffocate me. There is sometimes good policy in being obedient; on this occasion, I have been most submissively pliant, in consequence of his Lordship's request. I have condescended to receive all the fools that poured in upon me, with civility. My Lord is mightily satisfied; and, if I am not mistaken, those antediluvian creatures, though they leave me heartily tired of their formalities, have carried away with them no contemp-

tible opinion of my superiority. A coronet—a Countess—there are charms even to the vulgar in these sounds.

My penance does not end here—I must carry my obedience still further—I must suffer my person to be dragged from family to family to thank these odd bodies, with the politeness and sincerity of a Courtier, for the honour they have done me.

Such an aukward list of Knight's ladies, Squire's ladies, and Nabob's ladies, as would, at least, take me up a fortnight, if I was only to leave my name at their doors; and to spend a day with each of them—for which of my sins, oh heaven! am I to be so severely mortified? The secret is here, Lady Alice; Lord Mortington you must

must know, always recommends to the county, and puts in a puppy of his own, to say yes or no in the house. Now, if he should be thrown out in his interest, I have heard him declare, he would no longer attend a certain noble assembly, where his fall from power would so much lessen his consequence in national affairs. In such a case, his plan is to retire to his seat in Shropshire, and spend the rest of his days in the improvement of his fortune.

A monstrous comfortable scheme, prodigious pleasing to my ear, after I had, in violence to my inclinations—by the forfeiture of all my other hopes, submitted to an union, whose only charm was, that it would place me in a conspicuous light, in that world, to which I am devoted. Delightful indeed!

I should

I should not quietly give up a point that has cost me a price so dear; but, as I have reason to believe his Lordship is pretty determined in his flights, I thought it wiser to gain, by condescension to his constituents, what might otherwise be lost by opposition to his supreme will.

Admire my politics; but pity the situations to which they will unavoidably reduce me. You, who tread the airy round of pleasure, can have no idea of the detestable solemnity of a circle of country gentlefolks, whose politeness consists in forms, and whose unceasing civilities are downright troublesome.

November brings me to dear—dear London! with what joy do I look forward to that sweetest of all months—

the

the first, the best in my calendar! —then will I repay myself largely for all my present ridiculous sacrifices.

Lady Derwent longs to see my Ladyship—nobody is so happy as herself at my good fortune—I was always her child—her dearest Alicia. There is not another woman in the world she should have liked so well to have called her daughter. All the steps she took to oppose my union with Lord Bromsgrove proceeded from family reasons—that she need not tell me it was necessary her son should marry a large fortune—that it was my interest as well as his consulted. So much for her sincere, congratulating, and apologizing epistle, which I have answered with an equal degree of sincerity.

It

It is not an uncommon thing in our world for the dearest friends to hate one another most devoutly. Such refinements are very necessary; I am convinced, without such refinements, we should have but a small proportion of society.

CONTINUATION.

You ask me if I am happy. As well as can be expected, my dear. My Lord is a little odd now and then; but, let me do him justice, when he is disposed to be fretful, his domestics only feel his fretfulness—he has not presumed as yet to make me the confidant of his ill humour. I perceive by the sullen looks of some, the confusion and fright of others, whilst attending on his nod, and watching every turn of his

his impatient countenance, that his dependants have found no great advantages in the disposition of their Lord from the honour and happiness I have conferred on him in making him a husband.

It makes me laugh. What signifies the sullen looks—the fright and confusion of these poor souls? By the laws of nature and subordination, are they not obliged to bear with our tempers, be they ever so capricious? Well, then, as long as Lord Mortington continues to load me with marks of his generosity, and is awed into respect by my presence, if he should have faults I am determined to be blind to them. I have too much spirit to make myself unhappy for trifles.

I send

I send this by the Maitre de Hotel. My Lord assures me he is an honest man; and I wanted such a messenger to convey to your Ladyship's hands the family jewels which are of immense value. They were presented to me very graciously, at least the gift bestowed a grace on the giver, which perhaps does not literally belong to him.

These jewels are accompanied by an order on his banker for five thousand pounds, which I rely on your goodness, my dear Lady Alice, to apply to the purpose of making my appearance in town as brilliant as possible. Under the direction of your taste, my figure cannot fail of receiving a monstrous addition; and, to that taste you possess so superlatively, I take the liberty to leave the disposition of my jewels,

jewels, as well those which I have sent to you by Monteno, as those which the draft will enable you to add to the number.

When you see the family jewels, you will laugh at the ignorance of our ancestors, who, possessed of those valuable gems, were so profoundly stupid to suffer more than half their charms to be buried in the vile silver which encloses them.

Notwithstanding all the praises I have so liberally exhausted on my sweet Lord, I don't know but I am in danger of being rivalled—yes, positively rivalled, in his affections. I do not ask your Ladyship's commiseration—I will never forgive you, if you put off an engagement to the Festino—a Masquerade.—

a Masquerade—or the Duchess of D——'s assembly, to stay moping and weeping at home over the misfortunes of your poor friend.

You are not yet acquainted with half my good qualities. I pronounce myself a heroine of such prowess, that I can stand unmoved to meet the threatening calamity. It is not any of the aukward females, who compose our neighbourhood, that would have alarmed my jealousy, had I a soul capable of harbouring so mechanic a passion—but a certain damsel in my own family, without discomposing me in the least, has certainly fascinated my Orandates.

My woman, or one of my chambermaids?

No,

No, indeed, if you think so you are mistaken. The person I allude to is neither my servant, my friend, or my visitor.

In what character then are you to behold her?—Why, in the character of a companion—a companion of the most insufferable kind—not one of those reduced gentlewomen, whose poverty teaches submission—who fetch and carry, stay at home, or go abroad, just as we bid them—who smile, if we smile, or, if we frown and look grave, tremble with apprehensions—who will accept an old gown, in spite of the sour looks and airs of contempt she is sure to encounter from our injured Abigail, by whom she is considered as the purloiner of her property—one who thinks it honour enough to be admitted, a silent

silent spectator, to the company of great people, without presuming to join in conversation, or even open her lips, except out of our abundant graciousness, we ask her a question—one whose heart flutters at every little distinction —one who repays our encouragement, by making a thousand remarks on our friends, with which she diverts us in the hours of spleen and melancholy.

Such an animal as I have described, which is to be met with in most houses of distinction, is supportable—even pleasant—for whilst she dares have no judgment of her own, and observes an absolute submission to her superiors, she affords a convenient resource against ill humour, by flattering our foibles till we regain the usual serenity of our tempers. A companion like this,

this, I should have received into my family without repining; but our mothers, say what we will, are always wiser than their daughters, though every day may convince them to the contrary, if they were not quite incorrigible.

How different is the present from the last age! Have we not enlarged on all the elegancies of life? Have we not shaken off the barbarous modes and customs by which our grandams were enthralled? so stiff—so troublesome—that for my part I could no more move under them than I could dance a cotillon in shackles. I do not mean matrimonial shackles; I shall take care to make them sit perfectly easy.

But

But to return to Olivia, who I should never have dreamt of consequence enough to mention to Lady Alice Sinclear, if I did not imagine what I have said might have raised your curiosity; besides, her being my rival renders her a subject not altogether unimportant.

This obscure girl, my very prudent sister Lady Nelson picked up, somewhere in France, and sent as a mighty treasure to comfort her mother for the great loss she had sustained in her Ladyship; who must follow her deary, from a ridiculous point of duty, whereever the physical tribe were pleased to transport him in the double capacity of nurse and wife of his bosom.

Well,

Well, then: this Olivia, this pretty innocent being, thus imported, soon ingratiated herself into the entire confidence of Mrs. Selwin. Though a foreigner, and nobody knows who —the good lady's infatuation was so strong, that she chose to make an arrangement in my household by no means pleasing to myself, insisting on my taking Olivia with me to Mortington Castle. She did not explain her meaning for this absurd request, which, at the time she made it, I could not decently refuse—but I understood her wise insinuation—I am to look up to this fine pattern, truly, as an original which I must study to copy.

I know this to be my mother's intention, in forcing her upon me. She will certainly find herself mistaken, if

she calculates at this rate. Her favourite shall be welcome to the run of my house, because I will not disoblige her; that is, she shall be welcome as long as she continues inoffensive, and does not trouble her head about my affairs. A spy on my actions I will not bear,—neither will I keep about me a sentimental monitress. Should she ever pretend to inform or advise, be the consequence what it may, that moment is the moment of her dismission. To do the girl justice, I must own, she has not displeased me hitherto, only that I could wish to have her a little more under command.

You will be surprized when I tell you she gives herself all the airs of independence; and, what is still more strange, I feel something like reverence for the imaginary

Imaginary importance she assumes. When at any time I speak to her in a peevish or angry tone, which one has certainly a right to do to little people, I blush, and am as much ashamed as if I had actually offered an insult to my equal. Is not this strange—wonderfully strange?

I never thought I was a fool, before I discovered this unaccountable weakness, which I may conceal from you, but cannot hide from myself. Laugh at, despise me—I deserve it—I expect it—I hate my folly. How provoking, that I should be obliged to see her with the eyes of partiality! If she was lower in her own opinion, I think I could keep humiliation on her humility. She does not want humility neither, but it is not of that servile kind,

which debases—it never lowers her beneath the standard of respect. There is a something—a sort of natural politeness, in her manners, which would impose on you to believe she had lived all her days amongst the best company. Natural this something must be—for where or how could she acquire it by education? When addressed by persons of rank, she is not covered with confusion—she has no hesitation in her voice—no unmeaning stare like other insignificant folks, who have never been conversant with any thing above themselves.

This little Olivia would receive the advances of a Duchess with as much ease and grace as you or I should do. In conversation she acquits herself with so much good sense, a wit so brilliant,

with

with precision so exact, as fascinates her hearers. It is really astonishing all this in such a mere nobody! She is not, I will assure your Ladyship, at all seasons disposed to favour us so highly—she rather shuns than seeks opportunities of shining, for which I must allow she has most amazing talents.—More than half her hours are passed alone in her closet, where I have sometimes found her in tears—a love affair, I suppose: that passion often makes sad ravages in the hearts of the vulgar. Her melancholy, however, does not affect me—I have never courted her confidence, nor does she presume to trouble me by indulging her love sorrows in my presence. Yes, yes, she must be in love, that's certain; it is the only weakness I have

discovered about her—weak enough in all conscience!

Such is the rival I have to apprehend.

Pish! another interruption. Lord Mortington has sent to desire I will come to him in the garden. Some nonsense, I will lay my life.

CONTINUATION.

I told you so! This wonderful affair was to look at a speck in the sun. Foolish enough—why did he send for me? he knows I have nothing to do with the sun—midnight illuminations have a thousand times more charms for me, than if he could shew me half a dozen suns shining at once. The deuce take him for calling me down to see a speck.

What

What was I saying, when his wisdom interrupted me? O! I have it now—I was telling you that Olivia was my rival. My sun-gazing Lord is never tired of listening to her conversation—he more than listens—he even smiles—he breaks out into expressions of rapture—he is subdued by the sweetness of her voice—he extols the strength of her understanding—in short, I am condemned to hear the praises of this eighth wonder of the world from noon to night.

A delectable subject for a woman, no doubt!—as a wife, I am easy about the matter. I shall forgive Olivia for running away with the heart of Lord Mortington, if all the fashionable circles are not of his Lordship's opinion,

when I produce this phenomenon in town. Go with me she must, or I shall keep on no terms with Mr. and Mrs. Selwin, who I am not disposed to offend for trifles. Though I call it a trifle, yet my obliging them in this point is in reality no trifle. You, dear Lady Alice, cannot but own it must be horridly mortifying, for a woman of my spirit and condition, to drag about after her a young creature so captivating in mind and person.

I wonder Lord Mortington, who is her professed adorer, had not called her down to see this curious speck in the sun. She is much better calculated for sky-gazing than I am—I would not have disturbed them in their philosophical researches.

She

She is certainly the most beautiful creature my eyes ever beheld—I cannot help that—true, but I can and will help confessing that I think so to every mortal but yourself.

You will be curious to know, as I cannot shake this girl off my hands, how I am able to bear the thoughts of being eclipsed!—how speak of bringing her to town with calmness, and even call the incumbrance a trifle? The truth is, I am made easy by the great dislike I have observed in her mixing in company. I don't know her reasons—pride, I suppose, has a good share in them—pride at being seen in a dependant state. She avoids company as much as she possibly can, consistent with the complaisance she is always ready to shew when I request

her presence to assist me in receiving my visitors. It is this retired disposition, which reconciles me to the necessity of her attending me to town.

Here I am not at all alarmed at the exhibition of her charms; there I shall seldom tax her civility by desiring to draw her from her darling avocations. I shall leave her in quiet possession of her apartment to read, work, write, or weep, as she shall think most essential to promote her entertainment. Perhaps, you will say, by that time her disposition may be changed, and that in such a case, I shall find myself obliged to alter my plan. I have given you a right to suppose every thing that is absurd from my weakness, in the specimen you have already had of it in the declaration I made, how little I had the command

command over my own sentiments, that I cannot look upon her in the light I should do any other person in her situation. I neither love her, or fear her, but she forces me to admire her. That her disposition should change is one of the most improbable things to be imagined—no, Lady Alice, she will conceal her face from the world as religiously as a professed nun. Have I not told you, that, even in this recluse corner, she is not fond of exposing that face. I am sometimes obliged to teaze her from her retirement, which she shall soon occupy unmolested. Can you suppose any thing so insufferably dull as a têtê-a-têtê with one's husband? yet this I must unavoidably suffer in the country, if it were not for the interposition of Olivia. No, no, I am well satisfied that she will not

swerve, in London, from those good rules she has adopted at Mortington Castle. Besides, she will serve to dawdle away some of those hours with my Lord which I shall dedicate to supreme delights, from which I have been excluded these hundred years. Lord Mortington has been too long married, and is already too much the admirer of Olivia, to feel any regret at the exchange of my company for her's; and if my jest should turn out to be serious, I shall not trouble my head about the consequences.

To-morrow we go to Lord K——'s, about thirty miles from this place, where we are to spend a fortnight. Olivia does not go with us; according to custom, she has begged to be excused. As soon as I return, and recover the fatigues

fatigues of this nonsensical visit, I hope to acquaint your Ladyship, that the week, day, and even the very hour, is fixed for my removal to the paradise of all elegant enjoyments.

The happiness of embracing my dear lively Lady Alice, adds, in no small degree, to my opening prospect of felicity most exquisite.

LETTER

LETTER IX.

Lady Nelson to Mrs. Selwin.

Montpellier.

I AM just returned, my dearest mother, from the Count Alurędus's lodgings—you may remember the summons we had received when I ended my last letter. My head and heart are so full of the visit we have made, in consequence of his earnest request, that at present I can think or write on no other subject. I was startled, on entering the hall, to see the Count's servant following a porter down the stair-case,

stair-case, loaded with boxes as if preparative to a journey. As soon as he saw us he ordered the porter to wait his return below, and conducted us towards his master's chamber. In our way thither, Sir William asked him what occasioned this appearance of a removal? I really cannot inform you, replied the valet; my Lord, this morning, ordered me to pack up and forward all his things to Paris; I suppose his Lordship will give you fuller information; he seems very impatient for your and Lady Nelson's coming; he has been walking up and down his room this quarter of an hour, in expectation of seeing you. He spoke the last words in a low voice—his hand was on the lock—the door opened. We had no time for further interrogations. If I was surprised at my first entrance, my

my surprise was not lessened on finding the Count so extremely agitated, that, contrary to his usual custom, the reception he gave us was a silent one; he met us as we came into his apartment; he took a hand from each; Sir William's he pressed with an emotion too visible to pass unobserved; mine he lifted to his lips; a scalding tear fell upon it; but he seemed unconscious that a tear had escaped him. He recovered his usual serenity—he placed us on a sopha—he seated himself between us—his silence ended. I have entreated this honour, said he, from selfish motives; I wish to relieve my mind from the burden of those obligations you have heaped upon me, by making an acknowledgment of my gratitude; I wish to reveal the cause of that consternation under which you find

find me at this moment—these are my motives for requesting your presence —can you pardon the liberty I have taken? Our answers did not displease him. I own (continued he) I am distressed, infinitely distressed, in being forced to tear myself from friends, whose kindness, whose humanity, since I came to this place, have made my wretched life supportable. Fortune I thought was relaxing in her severity, when she introduced to my acquaintance Sir William and Lady Nelson, but the smiles of fortune are again interrupted. God Almighty reward you both! for the goodness you have exerted towards a disappointed man—disappointed in those to whom he intrusted his dearest treasure—robbed of the darling object of his soul's affection, he has now nothing left

left to attract the notice of a fortunate —of a happy world; he has now no other claim to its attentions, but what his afflictions may bespeak. The benevolence and humanity of your dispositions has opened me a passage to your friendship—a friendship, the remembrance of which my heart shall ever warmly cherish. He paused: he laid his hand on his breast with a sort of devotion, and rising, turned from us as if to conceal his emotion. Neither Sir William nor I had opened our lips during the whole time he was speaking—we seized on the opportunity his involuntary silence gave us—we assured him the sincerity of our regard, of our attachment, should end only with our lives—we acknowledged the honour he did us in accepting our services—we begged he would command

us

us in every respect in which we could be useful to him—we repeated a hundred times, it was impossible we could receive a higher satisfaction from any event, than administering to his comfort.

I leave you, my dear Sir William; I leave you, my amiable Lady Nelson; if you will receive a command from me, it shall be this—think of me sometimes—love me always—be convinced of my gratitude, and that I love you as a father loves his children.

I never saw Sir William so much affected; for my part, I could not restrain my tears—I indulged them freely. Why, my dear Count, must you leave us? asked Sir William. My heart dictated the same question, but my tongue

tongue refused it utterance. Your tender, generous natures, replied the Count, demand my confidence; I can no longer hide from you the cause of that despondency your kindest endeavours have been employed to soften. Forgive me, that I have so long withheld this confidence from you; my silence did not proceed from any deficiency in my affection to you, or from any distrust of your prudence. Had the secret been all my own—had it been all my own, I should not have hesitated; I should have lodged it in your bosoms. In acquainting you with the occasion of my sorrows, I must expose the faults of a brother once dear to my heart. I will inform you of those faults—I will submit to lay them open, rather than give you cause to tax me with reserve, which you would

would have sufficient cause to complain of, were I to bid you adieu, and carry with me the caution I have hitherto maintained.

The very reason for which he seemed inclined to favour us with his confidence made us use every argument in our power to dissuade him from his purpose; but our dissuasions, our arguments, were in vain; they could not prevent him from speaking on a subject which it was evident he never even thought of without the extremest agitation. He saw our desire to promote his ease, which fixed him the more in his resolves to conceal nothing from us.

I can have no doubts of your friendship, said he, why then should I let go the

This morning I had a visit from my landlord, to know if I could part with a couple of bed-chambers, for which I have yet had no use. He told me, it would be doing him infinite service, could I conveniently comply with his request, for that a nobleman, who was expected here either as this night, or to-morrow morning, had sent a servant on before to provide him lodgings; and that he wanted nothing but the two rooms he mentioned to complete a suit for his reception. Since I have been in Monsieur le Rue's house, he has given me no cause of complaint—he is civil—I like him—I would not be his hindrance—I readily agreed to yield him up the chambers he wanted, and got rid of his importunities. Soon after he left me, I happened to look out at the window, from which I perceived Monsieur

Monsieur le Rue in the stable yard talking to one of my brother's valet-de-chambres. My soul shuddered at the sight. He held his horse by the bridle; and before I could well recollect my ideas, I saw him mount; I saw him gallop off towards the post road. I could no longer doubt who it was that had hired lodgings in the same house with me—it could be no other than the Duke de Deni—I rang my bell with impatience. Monsieur le Rue made his appearance; he was inclined to renew his thanks. I broke in upon his harangue, by asking if the servant I had seen him talking to in the yard was the same that came to take lodgings for the nobleman he expected. He told me yes, and that he was gone to meet his Lord, to acquaint him every thing was ready for his re-

ception. So you have actually agreed, said I, hardly able to conceal my chagrin. Thanks to your Lordship's goodness, replied he; I am to have fourteen louis d'ors a week, as long as Monsieur le Duke continues here. I I have not seen a more fortunate day these seven years. Very well, my friend, returned I, peevishly—I have no right to be sorry for your good fortune—I hope it will assist you in disposing to as much advantage the apartment I now occupy. He was amazed—he was astonished—he would have demurred on the sudden resolution I had taken—I put a stop to the one, and prevented the other, by saying in a milder, but determined tone, that business of importance called me to Paris; that it did not suit me to stay longer at Montpellier. I dismissed him

him tolerably well satisfied; and have already given necessary orders for my departure. I have now, my dear friends, explained to you the reason that drives me from hence; but if you have not left this place before, I promise to return as soon as the Duke de Deni leaves me at liberty to pursue my inclinations; it is impossible now that I should be so happy to remain longer on this spot, as the presence of my enemy would make my residence afflicting to a degree almost insupportable.

That you may not condemn me for the most capricious of men, I shall hasten to inform you why I fly with such precipitancy from a person, whom the tie of nature seemed to have intended for my inseparable companion.

I bid you adieu my dearest mother, for this night; to-morrow I will endeavour to recollect what further passed on this interesting occasion. I have been writing a long time; and Sir William is just returned from his evening ride. Good night; good night; I shall dream of our dear distressed Count.

CONTINUATION.

A whole day has passed, my dear Madam, without my being able to command half an hour to continue the relation of our last interview with the Count. It is now necessary I should tell you, from what cause this interruption has proceeded, which is no other than that a family have arrived here from whom we received numberless

numberless civilities during the fortnight we staid in Paris. It was by the recommendation of Madame Tourville; (who is now at this place with Monsieur her husband) that I sent you the amiable girl who has been so fortunate to engage your approbation. It so happened that these good people came late last night, and Sir William engaged them to spend the following day with us, which I dedicated to the purpose of repaying some of those many polite attentions for which we were indebted to them in our way hither. Madame Tourville was very inquisitive about Olivia,—she appeared infinitely delighted when I told her that you had honoured her charming cottager not only with your protection, but saw, loved, and distinguished her merits. I thought when she first spoke

of her to me, that she had known her well, but find I was mistaken. She met with her by accident, it seems, at the hovel of a poor country woman, who nursed one of her children. She was struck with Olivia's figure; the elegance of her manners surprised her, and she found she had been six months an inmate of the cottager's family, to whom she gave a comfortable gratuity for her subsistence. Madame Tourville, who is one of the best women in the world, having discovered she was reverenced, or rather adored, by the honest couple with whom she lived, pitied her situation, offered to take her home and give her a place about her own person. This offer Olivia refused; but refused it with a grace and modesty so enchanting, that instead of offending her patroness, it engaged her

her to assure the lovely distressed creature of her good offices—she even insisted on her pointing out some other mode in which her services might be useful. Olivia was at last prevailed upon to acknowledge, that the wish of her heart was, to attend any English Lady to that country, though in the meanest capacity of servitude. Madame Tourville, who saw plainly that she was fitted for a higher station, and having an entire confidence in the woman with whom she resided, instantly resolved to seize the first opportunity of serving her, and in the mean time used a thousand kind arguments to persuade her to accept an asylum in her family, till she could fix her to her own satisfaction; for she found her determinations were to leave France; but with great humility she waved this ho-

nour, expressing herself highly satisfied with the kindness of her poor cottagers. I shall never forget, when I mentioned the kind of person you had commissioned me to send you; no, I shall never forget the blush of pleasure with which Madame Tourville proposed Olivia.

We went together to fetch her from the retreat she had chosen—she rejoiced at the proposals I made her; though I don't know why, yet I was abashed at making them. She had more the air, the dignity of a Princess, who was to give laws to others, than receive them in the humble capacity to which she condescended. I cannot help calling her acceptance a condescension; yet I have no doubt (whatever her expectations might have been) that at the

the time I engaged her to go to England, she had no higher view, than being supported by her own industry. There are some countenances which speak so many excellencies, that it would be an insult to one's understanding, or betray a narrow mistrustful disposition, to enquire further; and I need not tell you, Madam, that Olivia is possessed of this striking advantage. I dare say she has been unfortunate. With the same strength of opinion, I think I could venture to affirm, that she is innocent, that her misfortunes have not arisen from imprudence: your approbation convinces me I am not misled by appearances. I would have asked her the particulars of her former situation; but the grace, the sweet timidity, the bashful reserve, with which she received a hint I could not help letting

fall on that subject, kept me silent. I enquired of the good woman, with whom she lodged, in what manner she came to her house. I do not know, my Lady, replied she with eagerness; indeed I don't know, what brought her here, unless the blessed Virgin had pity on our sins, and sent tis angel down that we might edify by her example. She came (continued she) to our door in the dress of a peasant; she looked so sweet, so pretty, that my husband and I should certainly have given her a harbour, if we had had no other than the bed we laid upon ourselves; but as providence would have it, we were better provided; and since that blessed time she came under our roof, good luck has poured in upon us; we have found a cow which we had lost

eight

eight days, and have never wanted a nurse child, which serves to support us comfortably. What a character of our Olivia, in this simple eulogium!

I could not avoid mentioning these particulars, which the conversation I have lately had with Madame Tourville about this extraordinary young woman has recalled to my memory. At the time I sent her over, I was too busily employed in my attendance on Sir William; and so thoroughly frightened at the relapse with which he was threatened, that I had neither leisure or spirits to be particular, but satisfied myself with such a general recommendation as I knew would gain her a gracious reception from my dear mother. The progress she has made in your affections—the honourable

station in which you have disposed her ratify her worth, and makes me believe the account I now send you of the manner in which I became acquainted with Olivia, will not be unacceptable to her benefactress.

Sir William and I have promised to attend our friends this evening to a subscription ball, which, from the number of people of distinction who at present crowd this place, it is expected will be remarkably brilliant. I have little inclination to make one in the gay assembly; but this is a sacrifice I could not refuse to Monsieur and Madame Tourville. You know, my dear mother, the natural bent of my disposition is not disposed to solitude; there are moments, however, when the mind, over which a fondness for dissipation

dissipation has not entirely prevailed, loses its relish for those kind of amusements, and feels the same repugnance, the same loathing, with which a feverish palate draws back from that very food which before yielded it a pleasant gratification. My humour is just in this sickly state. We have lost our dear Count; lost him at the very moment when he had raised our curiosity, and engaged all our sensibility. How strange was the beginning of his recital!—How interesting in its nature!—I have not only to regret his absence—to feel for his distresses—to weep over the recollection of them; but also to struggle with my impatience almost ungovernable, whilst I remain unacquainted with the conclusion of his affecting story. I hope there is still an hour or two, before

fore I am called upon to attend Madame Tourville, in which I may give you the result of our last visit to that most excellent of men, the Count Aluredus.

You may recollect, Madam, I broke off where the Count said he would inform us why he fled with such precipitancy from the person whom the ties of nature seemed to have intended for his inseparable companion. A deep sigh accompanied these words.—I have already (proceeded he) bespoke your patience. You have permitted me to speak of events, which happened at a period distant from the date of my misfortunes; but from which the most afflicting circumstances of my life have, as you will perceive, originated. A sigh still deeper than the former escaped

escaped him: a tear stole down his pallid cheek; whilst for a moment he seemed devoted to recollection. Here was something awful in his meditation, which it would have been almost sacrilegious to have disturbed. We were silent; our whole souls were fixed upon his look, his attitude, which were alike strikingly pathetic. I have said already, that he was seated between us on a sopha, one hand he had carelessly laid on Sir William's shoulder; the other served to express even more than speech could have conveyed; it was variously applied, to his breast, to his forehead; it was frequently extended with fervour towards that heaven, to which he seemed appealing as the judge of those heavy wrongs by which he was oppressed. His eyes were often fixed on the ground; and, like a person weighed down by trouble, an involuntary

voluntary motion of his foot spoke the agitation of a soul greatly disordered. Such was his interesting figure! He broke the meditative silence: our attention followed him.—The late Duke my father, on a visit he made to your country in the early part of his life, admired,—as who can avoid admiring,—the united charms of mind and person which every where distinguishes the ladies of Britain. Had he kept his attention within the bounds of admiration, I should not, at this time, have cause to deplore a loss which will make my down-hill of life rugged, and strew with thorns the pillow of my old age.

My father's passions were by nature violent; they were heated by youth, and a princely independent fortune; thus

thus supported, they could not be restrained within the cold confines of admiration. He loved, he adored a young Lady at the court of London, of birth, beauty, and accomplishments; he did not sue in vain; in the course of six months, she honoured him with her hand, and he brought her off in triumph to this country, leaving behind him a thousand disappointed rivals to execrate their own ill fortune, and envy the successes that had attended his pursuits. As my mother was born and educated a protestant, there was no other method of reconciling either herself or friends to the union, than that common one, of entering into articles, by which she was allowed the free exercise of her religion, in which she was also permitted to bring up her daughter; my father reserved the same

power

power to himself in regard to the disposal of his sons. There are few instances, I believe, where a marriage of this nature answers every expectation of the contracting parties. That which took place between my father and mother may be called one of the very few exceptions. They never found themselves mistaken in their calculation of happiness, which, during thirty-five years they lived together, never suffered the slightest interruption. Alas! it was reserved for me to feel the dire effects of a connection, which I fear, had not received the approbation of heaven. Not in my own person was I to feel these effects, but in the persons of those to whom affection, as well as consanguinity, had bound me with the strongest ties. The Duke de Deni, myself, and a sister, fifteen years younger

younger than either, were the only fruits of this union. The agreement between our parents was most religiously observed—my mother was the best of women—we doated on her as much as we could have done had she been a catholick. She was permitted by my father to retain a chaplain of her own in the family; and to their joint care my sister's education was entirely submitted. This chaplain was a good man, of great sense, of an agreeable disposition, prudent, and no intermedler; it is remarkable, that I never remember any dispute or coolness between the priest of your church and the holy father appointed instructor to the Duke and myself. These worthy, pious men, lived more like friends and brothers, than men of different nations and of different persuasions. The same

same domestic harmony subsisted through our then happy family—every heart was replete with the tenderest, the most refined of human feelings, every bosom glowed with duty, love, and benevolence, feelings which were always shewing themselves in our words, our looks, our actions. About twelve years before the death of my dear mother, I underwent a severe disappointment, that of being unfortunate in a first attachment—I felt it sensibly—I was rather of a serious turn of mind; and this event having made a deep impression on my spirits, I resolved to embrace that order with which I am now honoured. My friends were averse to my choice, but their endeavours to oppose it were ineffectual; I listened to their reasonings,—I did no more than listen. The remonstrances

strances of my father, the intreaties of my mother, the persuasions of my brother, all united, did not cost me a pang so bitter, when obliged to refuse them, as did the tears, the agonies of my little sister, on being told the resolution I had taken. Maria, though hardly twelve years old, was at that early age, my dear Lady Nelson, alive to all the amiable sensibility of your sex; she was mature in all the strength of judgment some men have with vain partiality arrogated to our sex; yet her tears I could withstand; my God! with what difficulty could I withstand them!—I hugged the pleading charmer to my bosom; she was always the darling of my heart, but from that moment my own soul was not dearer to me than was my Maria. I will avoid being tedious in this part of my narrative, and inform

inform you, that when we lost the best of mothers, my sweet girl was turned of nineteen, beautiful as an angel; mistress of every female accomplishment; in all respects so estimable, that I gloried in my sister. Her alliance was sought after by numerous competitors; she declined them all; her motives were guessed at; but my father, who loved her as well or better than either of his sons, would not interfere with his authority to force her inclinations; and the ill state of health she fell into, upon the death of my mother, threatening a consumption, put an entire stop to all solicitations on that head. About this time, my duty called me from home; my absence I knew could not be for less than two years—it might be longer. The victim extended on the rack, the sinner despairing

despairing of mercy, could know no tortures, experience no agonies, severer than those by which I was assailed in taking leave of Maria, preparative to my expedition. The tears that fell from her eyes, her emaciated person, her pale countenance, all seemed to tell me, as I held her to my heart, that this would be a last embrace. With what reluctance, with what horror, did I tear myself from the arms of this dear, this affectionate creature! I felt a presentiment—it was not the foreboding of her death; it was the ominous prediction of her misfortunes.

I had scarcely left Paris three months, when the late Duke, my father, paid the common debt of nature, and soon after his interment my brother married. The Lady of his choice was young,

young, rich, handsome, well-born, and highly accomplished; she had many mental perfections, but too often those perfections were obscured by bigotry. The violence with which she was attached to the religion of this country, I must, though a Catholick, and I hope not altogether an unworthy member of our holy church, I must, I ever shall, condemn; because from this violence of the Duchess has proceeded all my afflictions: am I not therefore entitled to call it bigotry? Perhaps it would be dangerous, I know it would be disgraceful, for me to utter opinions like these to any but the friends I now speak before. An enthusiast would say they were inconsistent with my order, and derogatory to my character. To you I will confess more; I will own my soul free from those prejudices

dices by which most of my persuasion are enslaved. I am steadily fixed in my own principles; I will carry them unshaken to my grave. I am convinced our religion is the best, the wisest, the purest of all religions; but I am no bigot. Those I have most fondly loved have been protestants: God forbid, for their dear sakes, I should harbour such a tormenting thought in my bosom, that divine mercy shall not be extended to them with the same plenitude in which we expect to receive it. These have ever been my sentiments; and the honour of a friendship with Sir William and Lady Nelson has confirmed me in them.

Oh, my dearest mother! what a charming man is the Count Aluredus! We could not speak our thanks:

We looked at him, we looked at each other, as if it had been an angel that addressed us.

I distress you, my children; (continued he) hearts like yours must submit to pay the heavy tax which too much susceptibility imposes. Forgive the pain I may yet occasion you; suppress your emotions of pity; restrain your tears of compassion; keep them for a recital which will engage them all. The fortune my father bequeathed Maria was much less than what I expected he would have done; it was not enough to support nobility;—it was only sufficient to place her above dependence. As my inheritance was considerable, I resolved at my return to make up the deficiency; I even rejoiced to have an opportunity of shewing her,

her, by more than words, the strength of my affection. My father's motive for so partial a distribution appeared to me unaccountably mysterious. Maria his favourite child! yet give her so small a proportion of his immense possessions. How was this to be reconciled to his avowed partiality? There is but one way of reconciling it: perhaps, on finding her invincibly resolved to refuse an establishment in this country, he foresaw she would probably form a connection with some protestant family, and did not chuse his riches should be carried from his own nation. Be this as it may, in losing him, she lost an indulgent father, a kind friend; I may add too, in him she lost her only protector, of which sad truth I am going to convince you.

My brother had no sooner brought home his Duchess, than, under the mask of tenderness, and from a pretended great regard to the eternal welfare of my angel sister, she began to exert an authority over her in such matters where she was not even entitled to advise. Those privileges, in which my father had allowed Maria, were complained of by her new sister, as prejudicial to the true interest of her soul. By degrees, she was restrained in all those privileges; and, at last, the hand of tyranny was so far exerted over her, that the worthy priest, who had a principal share in her education, was not only dismissed the family, but ordered, under pain of perpetual imprisonment, to leave France within the space of six days. This was a shock too great for my gentle sister to receive with her accustomed

customed patience. She resented the indignity offered her good pastor with unusual spirit—she remonstrated with my brother in such warm terms on the cruelty practised towards her, that he, who formerly loved her with the greatest fondness, might have relented, had not my too rigid sister in-law, with a mistaken zeal; (I do her the justice to believe she acted from no worse motive) supported him in his expiring opposition, from which time he pursued her with unremitting obstinacy. It is impossible I should explain to you every particular of the persecutions she afterwards underwent. I shall only inform you, in general, they were so intolerable that, at length tired out with threats, wearied with importunities, afraid superior authority would interpose, (which she was assured by the Duke would be

his last resource) and to secure herself in the quiet possession of those principles she had imbibed from her mother, she fled to England, without apprising my brother or his wife of her intentions. This unfortunate affair happened about nine months after my departure from France. The Duke wrote to me, complaining of Maria, and of the strange step she had taken, at the same time declaring he would never more trouble himself about a girl so headstrong—so unmanageable; that nothing should ever tempt him to see or hear from her again. He concluded with telling me, he had transmitted her fortune to a banker in London, and had wrote to a relation of her mother's, with whom he made no doubt the little heretic would shelter herself, where and of whom she might receive it. The contents of this

letter

letter afflicted me beyond measure. I could understand by the terms of passion in which they were conceived, that the Duke's affections were entirely estranged from his once beloved sister. It was a long time before the particulars I have just related came to my knowledge. Even before I knew them, my heart, my reason, told me some arts had been practised to occasion a turn so unfavourable in his sentiments, so different from those I had ever known him entertain. Instead of two years, which was the time I expected I should be absent from my family, it was near four before I returned to them. The Duke received me with his accustomed warmth, whilst the Duchess embraced me with more than politeness; and assured me, with the most insinuating grace, that my presence was dear to

them. I was not so much elated by this flattering reception as for a moment to make me forget my dearest sister. I had scarcely answered their enquiries about my health, before I eagerly asked after my Maria; and said, I hoped the breach which had caused me the most poignant sorrow was by this time healed effectually, and that I should have the happiness of finding all my affectionate relations linked together in the same cordial chain of tenderness in which I left them. Both hesitated. I watched the countenances of both; I thought I saw in both conscious sensibility. The Duchess was silent:—I looked piercingly at her—a tear stood in her eye—she turned from me to hide the visible concern she was under. My brother affected a sternness, which I was pleased to observe

did

did not proceed from a heart hardened by displeasure; it was but affected; his looks spoke what a sigh he could not suppress evidently contradicted. — I thought Count, (replied he, rather sullenly) I thought you had fully comprehended what terms we were upon with that foolish, ungrateful, obstinate girl: how could you possibly expect a reconciliation? She is too proud to court it. She might have obtained it upon the easy conditions of becoming a Catholic; but from the accounts I have transmitted you—you had no reason to suppose she would accept those conditions. I have cause to imagine, (added he) that she has smarted for her perverseness, and that she would now be glad to relinquish her heretical opinions.

But who, my Lord, (interrupting him warmly) who has a right to compel or even persuade her to relinquish them? Not her brother, surely. When a parent gives up his superior authority, shall we arrogate to ourselves a prerogative never by him asserted? Shall we, ought we to act in direct opposition to what we know he not only allowed but protected?

The Duke was going to reply. I prevented him, and proceeded:—Pardon me, my Lord, I see and highly disapprove the methods which have been taken to bring back our amiable sister to the bosom of the true church. Had she been left to the workings of her own reason, which was strong above her years—above her sex, God in his infinite goodness might have restored

restored her to his holy congregation; we should at least have had this blessing in our constant view, as long as by our mild indulgence we could have prevailed on her to live amongst us. Our example, our instruction, might in time, have gratified the most sanguine wishes of our hearts. Brother, replied the Duke, with an air of impatience, you oblige me to tell you I did not expect to find a dictator in the Count Aluredus. I thought you my friend, the friend who should approve rather than condemn my conduct.—Alas! my Lord, I wish I could approve it in this respect, as I have done every other action of your life.—For shame, Count, is this proper language; are these proper sentiments, for a Knight of your honourable religious order? Can

you so far forget the dignity of your character, as openly to espouse a heretic—that heretic a sister—the avowed favourite of your heart—whom, by observing certain measures, it is yet possible to save from perdition.

We had entered into an argument, which neither could support with temper. The further particulars I shall pass over: it is sufficient that I tell you we parted, though not in absolute anger, on much worse terms than we had met.—In this interview with the Duke, I had gathered all the intelligence he could give me regarding my poor Maria. It amounted to no more than this: he had heard (he said) from report, that she was married, but married unhappily; and though he had taken some pains to enquire with more certainty,

certainty, he could not learn her exact situation, or in what part of England she resided. Grieved at the intelligence I had received of her being married—unhappily married; dissatisfied at the limited information I had collected; in a state of suspense and anxiety, I resolved to seek out my dear fugitive. I had no sooner formed this resolution, than I set about executing my design; I ordered post-horses, and, in less than an hour after I had parted from the Duke, I was on the road to Calais. The packet was just sailed. How tedious were those hours I spent in waiting! I secured my passage the next day for Dover, from whence I proceeded to London with eagerness not to be described. Being quite a stranger at that time to your customs and manners, with no other

other than a very confined knowledge of the language, I found myself greatly at a loss how to forward those enquiries that alone could relieve the intolerable suspence under which I laboured. I recollected the banker's name was Jameson, to whom my brother remitted Maria's fortune; and being informed he lived in the city, I hastened to him without once considering that some refreshment was necessary after the fatigues I had undergone. The information I got from this person added to the distresses of my situation. From him I learnt, that he had paid the sum of five thousand pounds, with which he was intrusted by the Duke de Deni, into her own hands, at the house of a Countess Dowager in Bernard-street, whose name he mentioned. As this lady

was

was of my mother's family, and abused the confidence of my sister when she flew to her protection; as she deserted her in the most trying afflictions woman ever struggled with, I must, for these reasons, be allowed to conceal even from you, the title her inhumanity disgraced.—The banker assured me, that from the time he settled his accounts with my sister, in presence of this lady, he had never seen her, but that he was afraid she stood in great need of consolation. These words threw me into such agitation, as did not escape his notice. He stopped: I begged him to proceed. He could not resist my importunities. I urged to be made acquainted with all he had heard concerning her, which he appeared inclined to suppress from motives that did him honour. Observing me weak, enfeebled,

enfeebled, almost fainting beneath the united shocks of grief, of suspense, of apprehensions, before he would consent to gratify my solicitations, he obliged me to submit to his friendly intreaties. Wine and biscuits were produced; I swallowed a little of each, which enabled me the better to support myself in the heart-rending recital he had to deliver. For the sake of brevity, I shall not particularize what I learnt from this quarter. Mr. Jameson spoke with no certainty. Common report had been his informer. Alas! to complete my woe, common report on this occasion had turned out of its beaten track, and approached too near on the confines of truth. The short history I am going to relate of my Maria, I afterwards collected, partly from the servant who attended her,

her, and partly from a letter written by herself—writtten in the most melancholy period of her life—delivered to me in the gloomiest hour of my own. This dear, this beloved sister, in six months after she had been driven from her native country, bestowed herself on the second son of a nobleman, more remarkable for the antiquity of his house, than for the splendour of his fortunes. In short, Maria's husband had a mere trifle to depend on—his possessions were almost ideal—he had expectations from men in power—he had no more than expectations; but his person was fine; his address uncommonly pleasing; his education and accomplishments gained him universal admiration. Such as I have described him, no wonder my poor girl's affections were sacrificed to his

his assiduities. It was a love match; and if prudence had been numbered with his other acquirements, it might have been a happy one. Alas! it was quite the reverse!—how should he know any thing of prudence; he had never been acquainted even with moderation. My sister, for want of friends, who could or would advise her, followed the instigations of her own generous disposition; it was blameable, but it was generous; where she gave herself, she gave her fortune without restriction. Her husband adored her—his family respected her; that is, they respected her as long as she wanted neither the assistance of their purse or interest; her smiles were courted by a train of parasites, who called themselves her friends, and a flattering world exalted the greatness of

of her virtue, the superiority of her understanding, the charms of her person, even beyond the standard of perfection—an imaginary standard, to which no mortal ever yet arrived, but to which she certainly came the nearest possibility would admit. The tear you see me let fall, at the distance of nineteen years, may witness to the truth of my assertion.

It was not a single tear, my dear mother, that the Count bestowed to the memory of his beloved sister—it was followed by another, another, and another—his voice faultered; he seemed nearly suffocated by the suppression of tender feelings, almost too great for human nature to support. I longed to hear more, but my regard for his repose was so much stronger than my curiosity,

curiosity, that I even wished Sir William might succeed, when he pressed him to defer the continuation of his narrative.

No, replied our noble-minded Count, the uncertainty of when or where our next meeting may be, obliges me to dispute your kind commands. I have told you, (added he, half smiling) it is the privilege of the unfortunate to share his troubles with a friend—a friend who will indulge him in the free disclosure of them—it is his highest—his supremest privilege—such an indulgence might be called the regale of souls; to my soul it is a cordial of the most healing nature. What is speech, but a channel through which we convey the over-flowing of our thoughts? Joy or grief are augmented or decreased

creased by participation; shall we not call it a fortunate circumstance, when an opportunity permits us to divest ourselves in part of those discontents we have industriously hoarded. Suffer me to proceed. Believe me, Sir William, believe me, Lady Nelson, were I never more to speak upon the subject that engages your attention, whilst I retain the powers of recollection, my griefs would be doubled by silence. Some months after my sister's marriage, nothing went wrong, every thing contributed to make her bless the hour she gave her hand to Mr. Newton—a man whose sole study was evidently devoted to make her pleased with her fate, though not to make that fate a happy one. I have told you his fault—extravagance is a fault, of all others the most pernicious in its consequences—how fatal to himself—

awakened him to a full sense of his misconduct. Their door, which was before crouded with carriages, now needed no porter to give a ready entrance to the followers of fortune. Fortune had left their dwelling, and her votaries pursued her to her favourite habitations. A few amongst the number of their former visitors, and those few only from motives of curiosity, bent their altered looks towards the windows as they passed that house to which a short time before they thought it an honour to be admitted—the generality turned their heads another way, as if poverty had been an infectious disease, to be taken in even at the eyes.

My poor Maria saw these fallings off in a more favourable light; she formed excuses

excuses for her friends, a title they had taken no small pains to acquire from her innocence and simplicity—she went so far as to make a thousand excuses for their omissions—she would not even in imagination accuse them of more than omission. One morning, having ordered her chariot, she good-naturedly resolved to give them an opportunity of expressing their concern for any appearance of neglect they might inadvertently have committed; and at the same time to convince them their behaviour had not been taken so ill as they had reason to expect. Full of this benevolent design, she drove from door to door, but was no where admitted;—some were abroad—some engaged—some indisposed. One lady had the effrontery to speak loud enough to reach my sister's ear,

(after leaving the carriage, on being told she was at home) she even screamed out to her servant to run and contradict the porter's orders, for that she had changed her mind, and would see no company. This was the very woman, under whose wing Maria sought a shelter when driven by the persecutions of a brother from her natal kingdom—that very Countess, whom I have mentioned once before.

My dear Maria returned home, heart-stricken with the disappointment she had encountered; the flattering deceptions with which she amused herself were all vanished; she now for the first time saw what is called the great world in its true colours; it was no longer varnished over with the smile of treachery. Despised, neglected, insulted, she entered

tered her own apartment; flung herself on a chair, and, bursting into a violent flood of tears, lamented the humiliating condition to which she was reduced. In this situation her husband surprized her. She started at his presence; she wiped the tears hastily from her cheeks, she strove by an assumed look of cheerfulness to hide the traces of that melancholy by which she was devoured; she was no adept in the school of art—it was the first time she had attempted to act the hypocrite—she acted it so aukwardly now that it could not answer the design she proposed. Her husband caught her to his bosom; he insisted on knowing what new vexation had happened to afflict her. She idolized her husband; it was not in her power to resist his importunities; she related the events of

her morning excursion; but in relating, she endeavoured to soften them, to spare him part of that mortification she knew he would suffer on her account more than on his own. He heard her with emotions not to be described—in the rage of passion he cursed the world, and imprecated vengeance on his own follies. The agonies with which his countenance was distorted, together with the horrid expressions he had uttered, produced such an effect on her already depressed spirits, that she must have fallen to the ground, had he not flown to her support. The moment she was a little recovered, he called for his hat and sword. My life, my soul, (said he) can you forgive the wretch who has undone you? Her dove-like eyes, swimming in tears, were lifted to his face; she

she pressed his hand to her lips; she tried to speak, but could not articulate. A servant entering left what his master called for, and retired. I see, my angel, continued he, as soon as they were alone, I see you have forgiven your imprudent, your miserable husband—such goodness as thine must be the peculiar care of Heaven; for thy sake I may yet be happy. I have just heard Lord C—— is dead, whose place I am promised by the Minister—I go to him, my love; never—never will I return, but to bring you comfort—in the mean time, suffer, I beseech you, no tormenting fears to disturb your peace—I go with the resolution of not being refused. Her spirits were revived by this gleam of consolation, and she promised to support them in his absence. He then buckled on his

sword; his hand trembled with eagerness—he embraced her fervently—and with an air which had more in it of despair than hope, he rushed out of the house. True, he had heard the person he was to succeed died the day before, but he was likewise told by the friend who informed him of Lord C——'s death, that his elder brother then abroad upon his travels, by the machinations of their father, was appointed to the post on which his only hope depended—his last poor hope. This accounts for the violence of his agitations, on finding his wife in the situation I have described; and when he said he would not return but to bring her comfort, he spoke with certainty. He went to the Minister's—he had his audience—his brother's name was actually enrolled on that very

very prostituted commission, which for two years had fed the expectations of a deluded, wretched, victim. He was seen to come out of this great man's house strangely disordered; his waistcoat torn open; his hair dishevelled; his poor devoted head uncovered. Guess the consequences of this fatal blow—I cannot explain them—I thank the Almighty, in France we fly not to such speedy methods of ending our misfortunes.—As the Count said this, he arose, and left the room: but returned in a few moments, more composed in his appearance.—Pardon me, my dear friends (said he) the liberty I have taken in withdrawing myself from you; there are some feelings with which we can combat only in private.

. . . . . .

I have looked at my watch, and find it time to prepare for my attending Madame Tourville to the Rooms—I would not have her call upon me before I am ready to receive her.

CONTINUATION.

I am never long at my toilet. I have now, my dear Madam, used more than common expedition. I hope my diligence will be rewarded with half an hour to pursue the subject which alone engrosses my attention. For a moment forget me; the Count again speaks; what could I say, that would repay you for his silence?

By the prudent management of those people about my dear sister, she never knew the manner in which her thus-

band

band quitted an existence he had not fortitude to support. She was kindly misled—She was persuaded into a belief that a fit of apoplexy had seized him in the street, and that he expired suddenly. It was not difficult to impose a more unlikely fable than this on the poor distracted creature, who lost her senses almost the moment his death was announced, though broke to her in the gentlest terms imaginable; it was too much for her reason to support the disclosure of this event; a sad—sad office devolved on a faithful servant, who from this kingdom had followed her mistress to England;—I shall by and by speak more at large of her worth. Maria continued in a state of insanity a month and five days, at the end of which time her reason began

to dawn; but as that gained strength, her health decayed in proportion.

I have told you her husband owed vast sums. The creditors came in upon his effects, and, to complete her sufferings, she was seven months gone with child. In this condition, rather than apply to the Duke de Deni, from whom she expected nothing but severe reproaches, and, what she dreaded still more, a renewal of his former persecutions; not knowing when I might return from my expedition, and above applying to a world of whose inhumanity she was but too well convinced, she had taken shelter in an obscure corner of the town, where, but for the directing hand of providence, I never could have discovered the amiable sufferer.

ferer. It was from the banker I learnt, that her husband was dead, and the manner of his death, which was afterwards confirmed to me by her servant Annanette, with many of those particulars I have just been relating.

I took the banker's direction to the Countess Dowager, concluding, as I knew not then on what terms they stood, that at her house I could not fail of an information where to find the object of my pursuit. I did not lose a moment in executing my design. I hurried to this detestable relation; unacquainted with her treachery. I sent up my name. My name gained me immediate admittance to the presence of that cruel haughty woman. The reception she gave me, I suppose, was the same with which she honours those

of her family whose stations are not inferior to her own—it was abundantly gracious; and she appeared to enjoy perfect harmony of spirits, till I began my impatient enquiries. She imagined, no doubt, my sentiments in regard to Maria were exactly similar to those of the Duke de Deni; that, like him, I had thrown her from my heart, and was indifferent to her fate; but in less than a quarter of an hour, she discovered her mistake, and I the true character of the Countess. She was covered with confusion, when I told her, in a resolute tone, that at her hands I required a sister, who, I well knew, had flown to her for protection—a sister dearer to me than life—a sister on whom I doated to madness. I am sorry, my Lord, returned she with an imperious air, that I cannot satisfy

your

your abrupt—let me add (her colour heightening with indignation) your ill-mannered demand—I expected more civility from the son of my aunt, and from a French gentleman of your distinction.—Afraid, if I betrayed all the warmth I felt, I might still remain ignorant of my sister's residence; I suppressed my resentment, and, to obtain my point, for once offered a sacrifice to pride. My condescension answered the end I proposed by it—it made my peace with the Countess. I thought I had gained much, but I was too sanguine. I besought her to inform me where I might find Maria; her answer follows:—Pardon me, my Lord, I know no more of Mrs. Newton's affairs than all the world are acquainted with—her imprudent marriage, and the consequence of her husband's extravagance.

travagance. But surely, Madam, you can inform me where she is to be found; it is that information only I intreat from you. No, really, my Lord, I cannot inform you; perhaps Lady L——, Lady G——, Lady S——, or Lady M——, may be able to give you this information.—For Mrs. Newton's own sake (added she with a sneer) I hope she has not behaved with the same ingratitude to all her friends, that she has done to me.—My sister, ungrateful, Madam!—Yes, my Lord, (interrupting me) can I call her less than ungrateful? Your sister has long dropped my protection. She has even treated me with neglect—she has never called at my door, or by a message informed herself of my health. I pity her misfortunes; and if your Lordship were to request it, I think I might be prevailed

prevailed on to receive her once more as my relation.

I knew ingratitude was repugnant to the nature of my Maria; but as I could not then contradict this woman's assertions, I contented myself with coolly thanking her for the honour she did me, and desired to know where those ladies lived whom it was possible were still the friends of my sister. This favour she did not refuse me—she gave me a written direction to their houses, and after receiving from her Ladyship a pressing invitation to make one in her Sunday's party whilst I stayed in town, I ended a visit which had so little answered the purposes of my heart. I will not trouble you with the further ill success that attended my enquiries.

I received

I received nearly the same answer from every other lady, to whom my application was directed, as I had done from the Countess. With a body harassed by fatigue, a mind possessed by despair, I returned to my Hotel in a capital street near the court; where I was confined to my bed three days by a fever that threatened my dissolution; at the end of that time its violence abated, and, when I had recovered strength enough, I insisted on going abroad, in opposition to all the arguments my physician could advance, who assured me such a step would endanger my life. I knew my own feelings better than he did. To have restrained the impetuosity by which I was consuming, whilst in doubt of my sister's fate, would certainly be more disadvantageous to my health.

health than any risk I could run in venturing to act against his opinion. I had hired a carriage on my arrival, which I now ordered to be got ready with all possible expedition—I intended to have gone to the banker from whom I had my first intelligence—my plan was to have advised again with him, and to engage his assistance in my pursuit. The fellow who drove me, having forgot the direction I had given him to Mr. Jameson's, stopped at the corner of a little obscure street, where getting off his box, he came to the side of the carriage. At this time we were near the door of a pastry-cook's shop, and as I put my head out to renew his directions, a female voice screamed from within, the Count Aluredus! the Count Aluredus!

In my then weak, languid frame of mind and body, it is strange—it is wonderful—the susprize I felt had not deprived me of all powers; its operation had a different effect; my faculties were not suspended—it was an electrical touch, and sympathy told me my search was at an end. Instantaneously I exerted all my strength, and with one effort of my knee, forced myself a passage, and burst into the shop from whence the scream had issued. Here I found Annanette, the faithful Annanette, supported by two people, who had imagined her to be seized with a sudden fit of phrenzy, she struggling to tear herself from their hold. My joy was so great, that pushing the man and woman aside who obstructed her, I took the honest creature in my arms, and without knowing what I said—

what

what I did—cried out, Carry me to her—where is she—your mistress!—your mistress!—carry me to her!

Annanette, whose emotions were nearly equal to my own, fell at my feet, and whilst she bathed my hands with her tears, sobbed out—Alas! my Lord, your sister—my dearest Lady, is——Dead! I exclaimed; but say not she is dead—I charge thee, say not that she is dead, and my heart fluttered; I felt as if a dagger had pierced it. No, no, my Lord, I am not the miserable messenger of such tidings;—my Lady is ill, very ill, indeed; but I bless God she is alive; I now hoped every thing. I could breathe again, her words recalled me to life; I bade her shew me to my sister's house. The good soul hung down her head—I guessed

guessed her thoughts. No matter, said I, as it has pleased Heaven to restore her to my embraces, no matter how mean—how poor the habitation that contains my treasure; lead me to her—you shall soon see your beloved mistress shining in all the affluence to which by birth and merit she is entitled. Annanette's countenance brightened as I spoke; she made me a thousand expressions of gratitude, and desired me to follow her, for that her Lady lived but two or three doors off. The people in the shop had not understood what was said, our conversation being in French, but they looked full of astonishment at every thing they saw, and as I was going out, I rewarded them with a piece of gold for what I knew I must have made their curiosity suffer. A moment's reflection convinced

convinced me the utmost caution was requisite in breaking my approach to the idol of my heart; that acting with precipitancy might be of fatal consequence. Instantly I changed my resolves, and adopted a different mode of proceeding from what my eagerness suggested; I did not recollect the ill effects my presence thus rushing on her might occasion, till I had reached the street—it there first struck me, when instead of going forwards, I turned hastily back, bidding Annanette do the same. I asked the people we had just left, to oblige me with a private room, pen, ink, and paper. This request was immediately complied with, and in an instant I was accommodated with what I wanted. I now began to enquire with more composure of many particulars which in my great agitation I had omitted, and learnt

learnt some of those which I have been reciting, with this addition, that my sister had been three months before delivered of a daughter. Annanette added, that since she had been a mother her spirits had rather revived, though her health daily decreased, nor could she entertain a hope of her recovery, but for the blessed event, as she called it, of my unexpectedly coming to England. I asked her what had brought her to the house in which I had so fortunately met with her? Never shall I forget the confusion into which she was thrown by this question; again, and again, was I obliged to repeat it. She was almost incapable of answering.—At last, with a flood of tears, she opened her hand and shewed me. My God! one poor bent sixpence.—This in an agony

agony of woe, she confessed was the last resource her dear honoured lady had to depend on, and with which she intended to have carried home some little matter for her immediate support. Maria's necessities appeared so much greater at this instant than my most desponding idea had ever pictured them, that the account I now received would have sunk me on the spot, but for the consolation of knowing it would be the last struggle she would ever maintain with poverty, or distresses of any kind, within the power of my fortune or my affection to prevent. I sat down full of these reflections—I took up my pen—My pen had not touched the paper—I cast my eye on Annanette. Annanette stood before me —her hand was closed—the poor bent sixpence struck across me—I still saw

it

it—the eye of my imagination saw it—I fell back in my chair—I roared aloud. Frightened to death on observing me so disordered, Annanette was running towards the door; she was going to call assistance; I believe she thought me expiring; it was an involuntary motion of terror. I caught hold of her gown—I beckoned her to silence. As soon as I could speak, I told her I was better, and desired, without alarming any body, she would get me a glass of water. She flew to obey me, and I found myself so well recovered after drinking it, that again I took up my pen, and scratched out, in a hand almost unintelligible, these few words:

BILLET.

'I am near you, my dearest, dearest 'Maria; your misfortunes, your afflictions,

'tions, are at an end.—I know your 'humble situation—I am informed of 'your sufferings. Compose your 'mind enough to bid me welcome; 'blush not, though surrounded by 'the appendages of poverty, to receive 'a brother from whose tender protec-'tion no earthly power shall ever 'again withdraw you.'

Take this, said I to Annanette; go back to your mistress, carry with you any thing you think she will be able to eat. After she has taken some refreshment, tell her you have seen a servant who you knew went abroad with me on my last expedition. Observe how she receives this intelligence; if you think it will not be too much for her shattered spirits, say you have spoke to this servant; say, that I being

come home, and not finding her at Paris, am on my way to visit her in England. When she is quite able to bear a fuller discovery, tell her I am arrived—tell her you have seen me—and last of all deliver this note. Be cautious in observing my directions; observe them punctually; I shall wait your return where I am.—Fly to inform me the moment she is prepared for my reception. Annanette was not fonder of staying than I was of detaining her, but flew to execute my commission. Half an hour elapsed—every moment appeared an age to me, my patience became ungovernable. I went out of the house; Annanette had pointed out to me the dwelling of my sister; thither I bent my steps; I even ventured to the very door.—I planted myself on one side of it, so that she might

might not see me from the windows. Whilst I maintained this post, my senses were all employed, my ears greedily listened for any voice or step that might proceed from the house; my eyes eagerly watched the appearance of Annanette. Five long minutes! I heard the lock draw back—I saw the door open—I saw the worthy creature come out weeping, sobbing, holding her apron to her face. She would have run by me towards the place where she expected I waited for her. Hold, said I, in a low voice, I am here:—is your mistress prepared?—My breath was so short I could hardly speak to be understood.

Oh, my good Lord! I am not to blame, I have done exactly as you ordered,—but my Lady, my dear Lady!——

I stayed to hear no more; I rushed by into the house—I ascended a little dark stair-case, for I saw no other entrance, and found my way to the chamber of wretchedness. A female figure, dressed in deep mourning, arose from a miserable bed placed in one corner of the room, and came tottering towards me. The scanty light admitted to this gloomy apartment served only to deceive me; the person I saw excited my compassion, but in her I discovered not my sister. Where are you, my Maria, cried I, where are you, my dearest Maria? I am here, my kind——her voice could command no more. The phantom which startled me on my entrance, threw her emaciated arms about my neck, and fainted in my embraces.

Just

Just as the Count was in this interesting part of his narrative, a number of carriages drove into the court-yard, on which he started from the sopha, crying out, it is the Duke de Deni, and his countenance turned to such a deadly pale, that I expected we should have seen him reduced to the same state in which, not a moment before, he had been describing his unfortunate sister. We were happily deceived in our opinion, for with an agility which his strength did not seem to promise, he ran to the window, and from thence to the bell, which he rang with violence. Go, said he, to a servant who entered, order my coach to the door, see it done instantly, and inform me the moment it is ready. Returning to us, Adieu! my dearest friends, said he, tenderly embracing us, I am broke in upon more suddenly than I expected. What still remains,

of many tragical events, you must be informed of, to make you comprehend my reasons for a flight apparently so strange. If I have not the happiness of returning to you, which must depend on the motions of the Duke, I shall find other methods of approving myself not altogether unworthy your friendship, by entertaining against my nearest relation sentiments of unjustifiable resentment. We were prevented from replying: his carriage that moment came to the door,—we saw his eagerness to be gone,—we did not attempt to retard his dispatch,—we contented ourselves with giving and receiving a thousand tender adieus, and bestowing on each other the warmest wishes of regard. Our eyes followed his carriage till we could see it no longer; we sighed—we looked up at the vacant apartment, another sigh,—

and

and we returned home. Sir William was so sensibly touched with the recent loss we had sustained, that in hopes of amusing his melancholy, I prevailed with him to take an airing on horseback. The moment Sir William was gone, I retired to my closet, and paid a tribute of many tears to the memory of our dear Count. Every word he had uttered being strongly engraved on my heart, I have been able to give you, my beloved mother, the exact particulars of his story, so far as he acquainted us with it. You will be able to judge, if I am in any very desirable cue to attend our friends to the ball; but they are come, and I must go, though it will be with the utmost reluctance. When you receive this packet, the size of it may startle you, especially as Sir William's letters will be added to those I have written.

We

We talk, we think, of my dearest father and yourself incessantly;—already we begin to count the days that are yet to divide us from your embraces—from the calm delight of Selwin Cottage; where, at least, I hope we shall spend two months the next spring.

Farewell, my dear mother; how hard I find it to write the word farewell! yet not half so severe, now the time of my absence is nearly expired, as when I last pronounced it in your presence.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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